

PLAY

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BATMAN WHAT'S NEXT?

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truth about Arkham

"THIS PROJECT IS TERRIFYING"

ASSASSIN'S CREED III

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Gearbox prepares its revolutionary co-op shooter for war...

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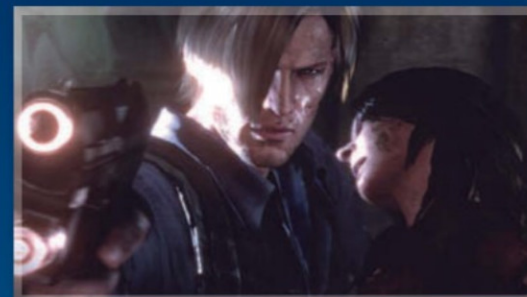
It's *Breakout* crossed with an RPG. At last, someone's finally made it!

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EXCLUSIVE ON YOUR DISC

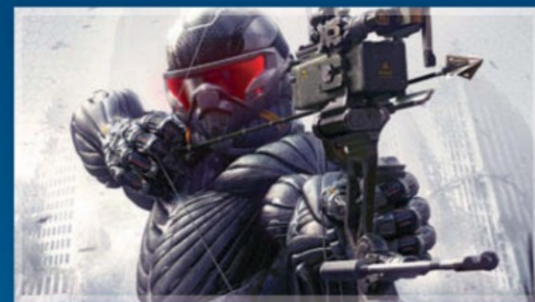


15 MINUTES OF RESIDENT EVIL 6

We play 15 minutes of Capcom's survival horror... watch it and then read the accompanying preview to guide you through the horror!

EVOLUTION OF CRYSIS 3

How did the best looking game on PlayStation 3 reach this point? We look at the previous two titles to see the evolution of *Crysis 3*

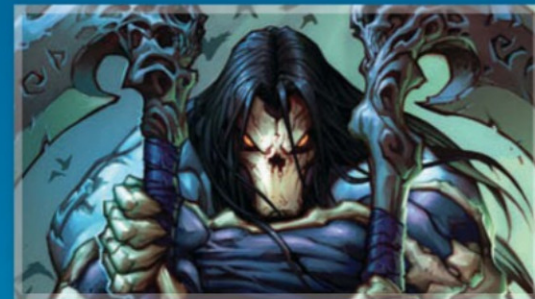


THIRD-PERSON SHOOTER SHOWDOWN

An angry rant (sort of) about third-person shooters while celebrating Sega's underrated *Binary Domain*

DARKSIDERS II REVIEW

You've read the exclusive review last issue and now you can see THQ's title in action, and also how amazing (possibly) we are at it



SEE THE BACK PAGE FOR MORE!

BORDERLANDS

REOPENING PANDORA'S BOX

CALLING ALL VAULT HUNTERS

WIN BIG IF YOU'RE SHARP ENOUGH

You'll have noticed the massive, dominating, life-affirming double-sided *Borderlands 2* poster with this issue. But what else have you noticed about the poster? Look closely and you'll see something intriguing, something only a vault hunter would note, which is a gateway to some fabulous prizes. That's all we'll say for now, as true vault hunters will be able to do the rest for themselves, but everything you need can be found on the poster. Get hunting...



BORDERLANDS 2

IT'S BEEN NEARLY TWO YEARS SINCE THE FIRST BORDERLANDS ARRIVED AND SHOWED EVERYONE THAT SHOOT AND LOOT COULD GO TOGETHER. WITH THE SEQUEL NEARLY HERE, PLAY SAT DOWN WITH A GEARBOX INSIDER AND TALKED ABOUT THE FUTURE OF ONE OF THIS GEN'S BEST NEW FRANCHISES



Borderlands 2 is the third most pre-ordered game in publisher Take-Two's history. Which is impressive enough on its own, but when you consider that it's only topped by *GTA: San Andreas* and *GTA IV*, it's clear that a lot of people want to get their hands on Gearbox's loot-driven FPS.

It should come as no surprise, really. The original's mix of shooter with MMO stats and *Diablo*-style looting was a welcome change from the sea of grey, military, action man fantasies when it launched in 2009. It had a great style about it, summarised neatly by box art that appeared to show a character blowing his brains out in a shower of in-game possibilities.

Gearbox has since taken what worked and improved on it. The first change of note is the environment itself, which is now far more visually dynamic than the first game's constant sea of sand. *Borderlands*' visuals are probably its main hook; the cel-shaded look gives the characters (and associated ultraviolence) a demented vibe that's tough to resist. By expanding

on the locales available to the player, Gearbox has kept the instant visual appeal while also still giving players interesting environments to explore later on in the game.

If the first game was all *Dune*-style vistas and shanty towns, then the sight of the gleaming Hyperion City that welcomes players to *Borderlands 2* should give an indication of the way the game is going. A far more urbanised place than the endless desert, it's almost like a real place.

Almost: after all, most actual places aren't run by someone going by the moniker Handsome Jack. Jack is the boss-man in town, as is evidenced by the statues of him that are up all around the place. Upon arrival it's up to you to do what you do best: choose a class and start tearing Handsome Jack's pretty kingdom up.

As before, there are four classes to choose from. First up is the beefy Gunzerker, the enforcer of the group who can duel-wield any weapons for a certain amount of time. Next is the Commando, useful for those who want to set up multiple choke points for enemies to stumble into, as this class can lay down turrets to cut the enemy down.

The Siren class is closest to what RPG/PC bores would term a 'thief', and is also the only class name to carry over. Sirens are gifted support units; not as capable in the physical fight, but able to outwit enemies and even freeze them in place so that the rest of the team can mop them up. Finally, there's the Assassin, encompassing much of the abilities of the original *Borderlands*' Sniper class. As expected, the Assassin is all about swords, sniping and stealth: a handy little recon class to have in your squad, in other words.

And you really will need to get yourself a balanced squad, as your foes are more devious than ever. We asked Gearbox AI programmer Jasper Foreman whether class choice would affect the way enemies interact with players. >



> "To a certain extent, yes. But for the most part it's really dependent on the player's tactics because a player can choose a whole wide variety of different skills," Foreman told us. "So, for example, if the player is a Gunzerker and they Gunzerk up close, then the enemy will react more to the ferocity of the attack and proximity, whereas the Assassin, specifically the Sniper Tree stuff where the player sits back, they will try to address that by trying to close the gap – get in close and try to chuck more grenades, things like that... it's very dynamic, it tries to read what the player is doing at any given time rather than saying 'Oh, they have this skill, so I'm [just] going to do that.'"

Nips and tucks aside, the classes are similar to *Borderlands*, if a little more refined, reflecting the feedback from the first game, which ranged from small issues to large ones. And there were big problems: one of the main issues for long-term players of the last game was that the skill trees weren't complex enough, which led to repetition and a lack of choice as the game went on.

To prevent the same from happening this time around, Gearbox is promising trees that it claims are four times as complex as the previous game. Players will have far more options at their disposal when choosing which direction to take their gunishment-loving avatar, which, when it really comes down to it, simply means more choice for the players, and that's never a bad thing. *Borderlands* lives and dies by keeping players interested beyond the noise of roaring gunfire, and this added complexity should do the job nicely. Again, Foreman explains how the skills affect your interaction with the AI.

"If you're using the Converge skill – the game-changer that the Siren has – your usual action would be to block an enemy, but if you have this Converge skill, what it'll do is actually suck in all the enemies around them and they're going to be stunned for a little bit – they're actually going to try to spread out a little more. Once that happens, they will be like 'Oh, we're all together, we need to get away from each other really quickly.' It's specific scenarios that you're able to create with the game-changers that they'll react to."

It's a promising upgrade, especially when you consider the tactical changes it brings to a game already famous for making players work together. No-one really played *Borderlands* solo, after all, and no-one

PLAYERS

AXTON

COMMANDO

Axton's skill is that he can deploy an advanced turret, which can be tweaked and tuned in different ways with the skill trees. For example, with the Gunpowder Tree, you gain the longbow turret and can teleport it into place rather than having to throw it. Other trees will add an extra gun (Guerilla) or give you stat boosts (Survival). Bonus fact: Axton wears his late wife's dog tag! We don't know why we exclaimed that. It's not something to be excited or proud of. Sorry.



SALVADOR

GUNZERKER

He may suffer from stunted growth due to heavy steroid use but he can dual-wield any weapon in *Borderlands 2*. Which isn't any side-effect of steroids we've heard of but anyway. Known as Gunzerking, he can pick skills from the Rampage, Brawn and Gun Lust skill trees. Our favourites are Double Your Fun (throws two grenades for the cost of one), Fistful of Hurt (changes melee animation to super-powered uppercut) and Money Shot (last bullet in the clip does huge damage).



ZERO

ASSASSIN

Being an assassin, Zer0's skill is Deception, which allows him to deploy a holographic decoy of himself and enter 'stealth' mode. This grants him special vision where critical hit locations are flagged up in blue and better still, the longer he stays cloaked, the more damage he'll do. Better yet are the extra skills he has. One ability lets your bullets pass through enemies and do double damage to those behind, while another lets you mark enemies for allies, increasing the damage they do.



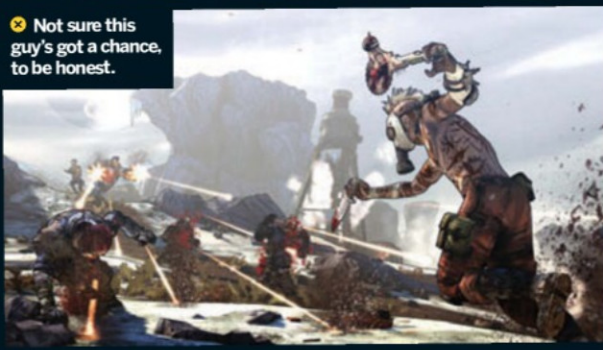
MAYA

SIREN

Maya has the Phaselock ability, which lets her lock onto an enemy in another dimension, keeping them from fighting back. Most of her key abilities are centred around use of Phaselock. You can gain energy orbs by defeating Phaselocked enemies (Sweet Release), revive players by using Phaselock on them (Res) or cause Phaselocked enemies to fight each other (Thoughtlock). Also, the more you read Phaselock, the weirder it looks and sounds. Phaselock. Phaselock. Phaaaseelooock.



✖ Not sure this guy's got a chance, to be honest.



All I Need is One Swapping Weapons causes your next shot fired to deal Bonus Damage.
Gun Damage: +150%
Next Level: Gun Damage: +200%

GUNZERKER
SKILL POINTS 8
Spend Points

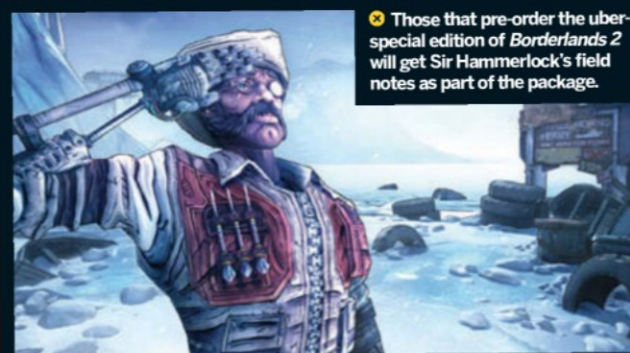
REOPENING PANDORA'S BOX



“ In *Borderlands 2* we like to have what we like to call layered combat ”
JASPER FOREMAN, GEARBOX



✖ And people wonder why this game is so popular...



✖ Those that pre-order the uber-special edition of *Borderlands 2* will get Sir Hammerlock's field notes as part of the package.



✖ Customisation will be deeper this time around; Gearbox claims to have implemented trees that are four times as complex as before.

should play *Borderlands 2* solo either. If they do they'll seriously miss out, because more complex skill trees mean more outrageous, distinct kill squads. And you *will* be killing.

There might be a metric tonne of upgrades, and a fair amount of time spent acquiring trinkets, but first and foremost *Borderlands 2* is about going on a crazy rampage. "[Balancing the battlefield] has actually been a part of our formula from day one," Foreman continues. "In *Borderlands 2* we like to have what we like to call layered combat. Zoning in on the Bandit combat [in *Borderlands*], you had the basic guy who sits back with the gun and then you had the Psychos who came in for the kill and then you had your bigger guys who were a lot more slow and plodding but could soak up a lot more damage. That's been our basic formula throughout [the development of] *Borderlands 2*. We also have some more unique interactions, which are mostly random. More Goliaths in this area, but you can still get a random Bandit or a Psycho. One of our fun little interactions is if you get a Goliath and a Midget nearby, you'll actually

get the Midget jump on the Goliath's shoulders, and become more of a formidable thing because the Midget by itself isn't much of a threat."

Fortunate then that you'll still have a bazillion guns at your disposal. The first game is in *The Guinness Book Of Records* for having the 'most guns ever', and according to Gearbox bossman Randy Pitchford this game is going to have even more. As we all know, more = better.

So it's a shame that the local co-op experience isn't following the same maxim, with it still capped at two players rather than four. We can't really blame the developer, seeing as the PlayStation 3 is now roughly 60 years old, but it's still disappointing. It's not all bad on the co-op front, however: drop in/drop out local play has been added, meaning that your housemate/partner/drunk friends can jump in whenever they want. Which means, of course, that the game will somewhat scale to compensate.

"Well, [when there are more players] there's the basic stuff like adding a little bit more health and a little bit more shield [to enemies], that kind of thing" Foreman told us. "You'll see them try to do a little

bit more in the way of flanking behaviours. But it also comes down to target priority. For instance, you might be playing as a Gunzerker, and as a single player, you're going to just run in there and take up all the aggro, but if you have multiple players, the enemies have multiple targets to take care of. They might see what [the Gunzerker] is doing and try to follow the aggro, but some guy off to the side might decide he's not going to be fooled by just that and try to go around, get round the back to the sniper."

With the classes changed and the skill trees sorted then, the only thing to really fix is the repetitive nature of the quests themselves. As the first game wore on there was no getting away from the fact that going from point A to point B and shooting X enemies for Y loot started to get a little boring.

Again, Gearbox has held its hands up and attempted to fix this, which will hopefully lead to more dynamic missions, even as the game wears on. If the studio can actually address these faults with the same finesse that it applies to the wonderful art direction then this is going to be absolutely brilliant. >

THE ENEMIES OF BORDERLANDS

PLAY SAT DOWN WITH AI PROGRAMMER JASPER FOREMAN TO TALK ABOUT THE BAD, THE WORSE AND THE STRAIGHT UP UGLY YOU'LL ENCOUNTER IN BORDERLANDS 2

THRESHERS

"The Threshers are these big guys, not like a sandworm, but more like a squid/sandworm hybrid, so they burrow into the ground. When they burrow into the ground, you can see where they're going with these little Bugs Bunny-type trails. They're a little bit bigger than your normal *Borderlands*/Pandora creatures. What's interesting about them is they've got these long tentacles that will pop up out of the ground far away from the body. You have to take into account what each bit is doing – the body and the tentacles – and decide which you want to take on. Sometimes just the tentacles pop out and you have to take care of those to get the head to pop out.

"Like all the enemy types in *Borderlands 2*, there are different variants of each. One of my favourite Threshers is the Wormhole Thresher. Like I said, all the Threshers have the main body part and the tentacles that come up, and the Wormhole Thresher's just like that, but when you first see him he's a whole lot more menacing. He's got these spikes everywhere, and what he can do is he can pull in a singularity [a black hole] and suck in the player and anything else that's around him. So when it's sucking you in, it's pulling you into those spikes and causing a lot of damage. If you get behind something, he can't suck you all the way there."

“Threshers have got these long tentacles that will pop up out of the ground far from the body”

GOLIATHS

"The Goliaths are one of my favourites. They're big, hulking guys, humanoid, but mutated. When you see them, you'll pretty soon realise that they pretty much always duel-wield. Their helmets contain their rage a little bit by giving them this kind of tunnel vision. At any time you can shoot off this helmet and this Goliath will go crazy – he'll turn on his guns and he'll just go berserk. He'll punch everything and anything around him, and that includes his former allies. If there's a Bandit right there, he'll just start punching and wailing on that guy.

"What's really interesting about him is that if he kills one of your co-op buddies or a Bandit nearby, he will level up. You can actually see him get his health back and get a little bigger. He becomes worth more experience to the player and from him you can actually get some better loot. So you have a choice there; you can take him out while he isn't much stronger than a normal Bandit, or you let him wreak havoc. It depends on whether you want him to keep levelling up so you can get that better loot and better XP."



“ Similar in style, but they’re much smarter, they’re much more intelligent this time ”

BANDITS

“The Bandits are back, bigger and better than ever. Pretty similar in style and form to the way they were before, but they’re much smarter, they’re much more intelligent this time. In addition to them just going somewhere and maybe shooting at you and maybe taking up some cover somewhere, they’ll actually take much better advantage of the space. If you fight several Bandits at the same time, you’ll see them spreading out a little bit; not only do they take advantage of cover, but you might see some flanking and using elevation to their advantage to get a better shot at you.

“You’ll actually see them communicating with each other. You might see a guy give a command to charge you, for example and you’ll see everyone put away their weapons, pull out a knife or other melee weapon and charge the player. You might also see, if the player gets backed into a corner, a Bandit tell all the others to throw a grenade and the Bandits will all throw a grenade all at the same time. They really give the player a run for their money.

“Pretty much anything you can find on the ground, guns-wise, you can find in the hands of the Bandits. Some of them are more tailored to some types of weapons than others. You’re not going to find a whole lot of rocket launchers on the Bandits because they’re not quite tailored to that type of combat. But we have other enemies that will specifically, say, only have rocket launchers. If you take all the various humanoids from across Pandora, you’ll find all of the different weapon types among them.”

SKAGS

“You’ll see all the old ones you saw before, the regular adults, Spitter Skags etcetera. There are a couple of new ones, but mostly you’ll see improvements to what was in *Borderlands*. They’re smarter, more vicious. In addition to that, they communicate with each other. The Badass Skags are back too, and in the original, the Badass Skags were always elemental. The Badass Fire Skag, the Badass Shock Skag. That’s back as well, but additionally, the Badass Skags can actually buff the other Skags. So you might actually see, for instance, the Badass Shock Skag do this roar that calls up the other Skags, do these big AOE effects, buff them all so they all become stronger. You’ll see an actual visual change on them, see some sparks flying over them and they’ll move faster.”

HYPERION LOADER

“Hyperion [Corporation] is a big presence on Pandora now. It’s taken over a lot of the planet. In order to help reinforce that, it’s got this Hyperion army. There are various different pieces to it, but one of the biggest ones, the bread and butter of the army is the Loader.

“The Loader is of course a robot and there are lots of different types, just like the other *Borderlands* enemy types. There’s variety. The regular/basic model is the Gun Loader. He’s going to act just like you’d expect – a regular battle droid. Human-style appearance, heavy guns, he’s going to try to find a good place to shoot you from, throw grenades, smack you if you get too close.

“Then you have more intimidating models, like the War Loader. This is a Loader that looks kind of like the others – they’re all pretty similar models – but the War Loader has these kind of giant cannons on his shoulders. He’ll plant himself down and shoot a huge barrage at you until his guns overheat from the sheer volume of firepower coming out of them.”

WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN

IT WOULD HAVE ALL BEEN SO DIFFERENT



In the history of videogames there are many celebrated stories of developers changing direction during development and being better off for it. PlayStation classic *Resident Evil* went from being a first-person game to a creepy third-person adventure, creating survival horror as we know it. More recently *Metal Gear Rising* turned into *Revengeance*, switching developers as it did so. And, between sightings in 2007 and 2009, *Borderlands* changed its art style from what you see here into the direction it still boasts today.

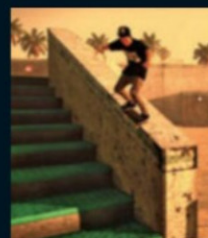
Look closer at the older images and there are hints of the cel-shaded future, but it’s difficult to imagine how *Borderlands* would have fared if it had launched like that. We like to think that it would still have done well, of course, but given the way the game stands out (even now) it’s doubtful it would have done the same business. There was uproar among the community when it was first revealed, but we’d bet not a single fan would trade now.



Install

Where fact + opinion ÷ PlayStation = the truth

Need To Know



New Tony Hawk?

"Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD is a very good way to reacquaint people to the franchise," said Josh Tsui, CEO of THPS HD devs Robomodo. "Moving forward we'd have to see what our options are for a completely new experience." A new Tony Hawk in the old arcade style? Yes bloody please.



JUST WHAT THE HELL IS GAMKAI AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR PLAYSTATION?

IMPORTANT GAMING NEWS YOU CANNOT AFFORD TO MISS



Family Guy gets ready

The big question is, will *Family Guy: Back To The Multiverse* be any good? You'll have to wait for our review for us to tell you no. We mean, erm, give the game a fair go. But we can tell you it has co-op (local only), exploding nappies and Peter Griffin dressed as a pirate. It's out on 28 September.



Troubled Final Fantasy XIV 'reborn'

Square Enix has re-announced *Final Fantasy XIV* and slapped its burn with the pompous *A Realm Reborn* subtitle, as the troubled MMO heads for a March 2013 release on PS3. It hit PC in September 2010 but its poor reception forced Square to rethink.



Burning Vitas hot with Japanese government

PS Vitas are hotting up in an unusual way, with a Japanese government agency looking into reports of the handheld frying. To date, 31 Vitas have burnt out. Sony says the issue is caused by liquid near the connector. Moral of the story? Electricity and liquid don't mix, duh.

THE FUTURE OF GAMING? PS4? A NEW XMB ICON ON PS3? WE ANSWER THE BIG QUESTIONS ABOUT SONY'S EVEN BIGGER PURCHASE

So what is Gaikai and why should I care?

Gaikai is, basically, a streaming games service. You load up a programme, select a game from a list and – through the power of voodoo – the game is streamed through the internet to your screen. You have full control over it and play it like any other game. Basically, it's madness. And you should care because it could well be a paradigm shift in gaming, removing the need for you to have expensive, powerful hardware sitting under your TV. Mainly because Gaikai (and OnLive) eliminate the need for dedicated hardware.

This sounds like witchcraft and I do not believe it is real.

It is real and it has been proven to work – and do you really think Sony would drop \$380 million (£243 million/€309 million) on a tech that doesn't work? There are teething issues and as of right now we don't exactly live in a world that can give us optimal service. Basically, broadband infrastructure is very much fallible, and fallible internet means fallible game-playing. But the concept is sound, solid and functional.

So what's the point then? Why has Sony bought it?

The point is, with technological refinements on the Gaikai side of things and ever-increasing broadband speeds on the other side, this could be a huge part of the future of gaming. Sony clearly thinks this, hence getting in at the ground level and buying up the technology for inclusion in all of its gear. Though admittedly the company hasn't told anyone specifically what it intends to do with it at the time of writing.

How exactly is this the future of gaming though? Sounds like silliness crossed with nonsense.

It's not *the* future – it's *part* of the future. A world where as well as the traditional shop-bought copies,

bargain-hunted second-hand copies from eBay and overpriced (and PS Plus freebie) downloaded copies, we also have the ability to access a library of hundreds, thousands more games at the touch of a button. Marketed as *the* future, it just sounds too good to be true. Pushed as a *part* of the future, it's just damn tempting.

But people don't know much about the technology – isn't Sony jumping the gun a bit buying up a whole company like this?

We asked Michael Pachter – because why not? – who said: "I'm pretty sure [Gaikai] works, but it hasn't resonated (yet) with the public. I think Sony is doing this pre-emptively, doesn't want Gaikai in partnership with other TV makers, and certainly doesn't want consumers to see Gaikai as a substitute for next generation consoles. They can control the process through ownership, and that's the path they chose."

So will Gaikai become a cornerstone of PlayStation 4?

We don't think so – it's too big a leap to entirely change the technology and, on a more basic level, the method of how we play our games. Pachter agrees: "I don't think it meaningfully impacts PS4, other than to provide greater value/more options for gamers (as you can take the games anywhere to any internet-connected device)."

Alright then, but will we see it on PS3, or Vita?

That wouldn't be out of the picture. Ignoring the whole 'appreciation of technical limitations' thing, Gaikai is, on a very base level, similar to other streaming services. Services like BBC iPlayer or Netflix, which already exist on PS3. As such, it being introduced to the PS3's XMB – maybe as a demo/rental service – is something we can't discount right now.



INSTALL

BLACK OPS II MULTIPLAYER QUICK-FIRE FACTS

Runs at **60 frames** per second

You can edit your own **emblem**

Two new modes: Multi Team (essentially Team Deathmatch with up to six teams) and **HardPoint** (you have to control map points)

Wildcards allow you to double up on perks and primary weapons, or triple up on weapon attachments

Blue Perk Tier has **Lightweight, Flak Jacket, Blind Eye, Ghost, and Hardline**

Green Perk Tier has **Cold Blooded, Toughness, Hardwire, Fast Hands, and Scavenger**

Yellow Perk Tier has **Engineer, Extreme Conditioning, Dead Silence, Tactical Mask, Dexterity and Awareness**

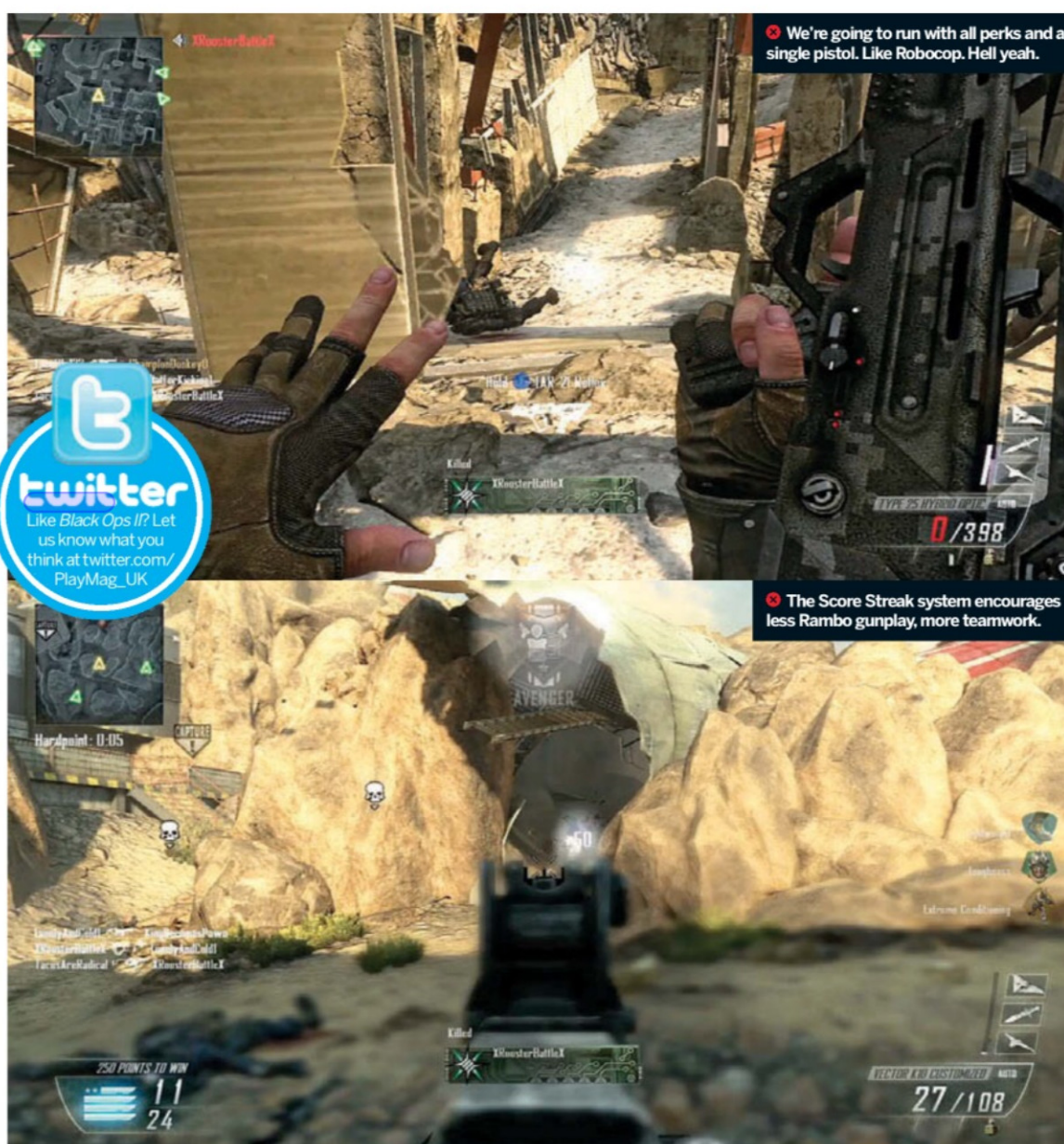
Grenade Launcher attachment returns, as does **Tactical Knife**

You rank up to **level 55** and there are **10 prestige levels** in total

There is no **'quickscoping'**

Wager matches have returned

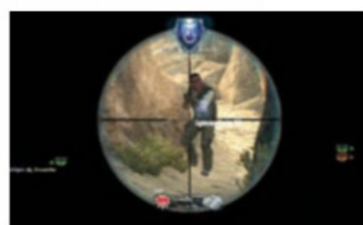
You will now have the option to **take over** the controls for AI-controlled Score Streaks



EVERY SCORE STREAK

All 22 listed in order of cheapest to most expensive...

RC-XD	Dragonfire
UAV	AGR
Hunter Killer	Stealth Chopper
Care Package	Orbital VSAT
Counter UAV	Escort Drone
Guardian	Warthog
Hellstorm Missile	EMP Systems
Lightning Strike	Lodestar
Death Machine	Vtol Warship
Sentry Gun	K9 Unit
War Machine	Swarm



THE FIVE ESSENTIAL FACTS

BLACK OPS II

1 KILL STREAKS ARE GONE

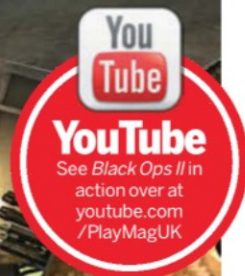
You may have just spluttered your coffee/Coco Pops/chewing tobacco all over the mag in shock. Wipe it off, we'll wait. Good. So yes, back to the big news then. Kill Streaks are gone and instead, they're being replaced by Score Streaks. They work the same in essence, as you're rewarded with bonus weapons/activations once you hit a certain score, but shifts the dynamic away from purely killing to anything that grants you a score – completing objectives, nailing assists, and so on. Treyarch has reworked the points system with Score Streaks in mind. For example, if you call in a UAV, you now get 25 points for every kill your teammate gets with a spot assist. We'll have to see what effect this ultimately has on the gameplay and if it does promote the idea of team-play over camping objectives for kills and the like.

2 OVER 100 ITEMS TO UNLOCK

The system of using COD Points to unlock weapons is gone and in its place, you're now granted an unlock token every time you level up. These are what are used to unlock the weapons, score streaks, equipment and so on, the only limit being that some items remain locked until you hit the requisite rank as well. There are over 100 items in total. The smarter of you will have already noted that *Call Of Duty* ranks don't go over 100, so how do you unlock all the items? You have to prestige to catch 'em all, giving you more incentive to prestige this time around than just a fancier emblem next to your name. Treyarch says it will go into more detail on the unlock and prestige system in the future but for now, know that this time round, you won't have everything unlocked by level 35.

3 PICK 10 REPLACES CREATE-A-CLASS

Black Ops had a Create-A-Class system, which allowed you to pick your own weapons to fit in its defined template of primary weapons, secondary weapons, three perks, equipment and so on. *Black Ops II* has ditched that entirely in favour of its new Pick 10 system, where you can put together any ten items you want. You can go without perks or grenades. You don't even have to take a weapon. You can also take two perks from the same class or whack three attachments onto your gun. You can put your class together however you want with any ten items. It's a wild approach to customisation that will put the overall balance under enormous strain but also allows you to personalise your character with a truly unique set-up.



MAGS ON THE MOVE

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MULTIPLAYER



4 LIVESTREAM YOUR OWN MATCHES

Anyone who's paid attention to gaming recently will have noticed the rise of gaming tournaments and livestreams to the point where even *Call Of Duty* has to acknowledge its presence. But no-one could have expected Treyarch to jump on the eSports bandwagon quite like this. In *Black Ops II*, you can livestream your match to the web and you can even plug in a USB camera so your face shows up alongside the gameplay. Further to that, there's 'Codcasting', where two players serve as Shoutcasters (essentially commentators) on the match. They have options to toggle elements of the UI on or off, as well as switching to the overhead map. What about cheaters who can watch your livestream and pinpoint where you are? The livestream will be delayed by 15 seconds to prevent that happening.

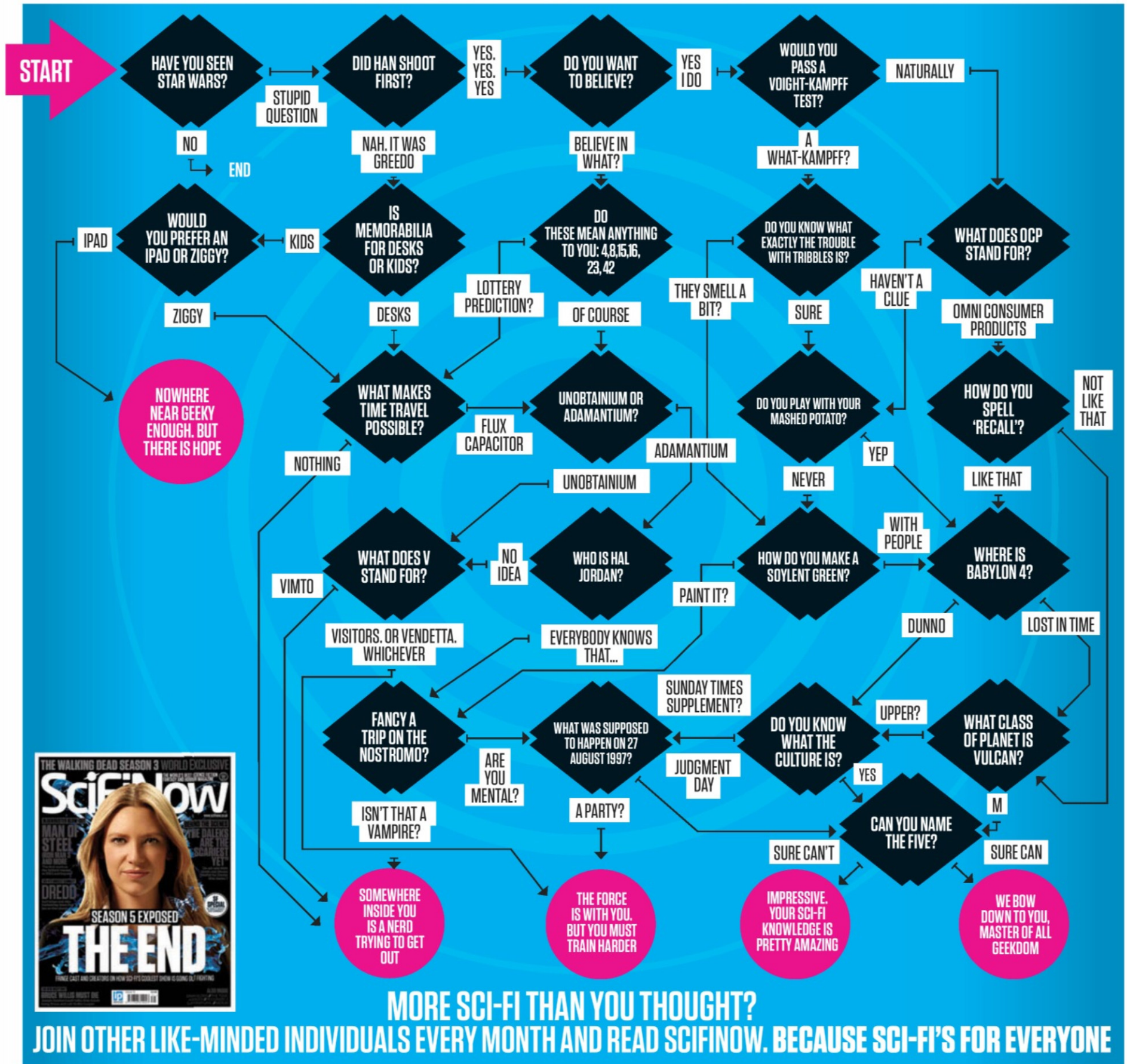
5 BRAND NEW DEATH TOYS

Treyarch has spiced *Black Ops II* up with lots of new equipment. The Millimetre Scanner detects targets by sending a pulse from your gun, flagging up enemies through walls, smoke and anything obscuring your vision. The Assault Shield is a special bit of equipment that serves as portable cover, which can be stuck into the ground. As for the Score Streaks, one of the most important new additions in relation to that is the Guardian, a turret that sends out waves to slow a player down and distort their view, setting them up for an easy kill. The difference between a Guardian and a standard just-kills-them-outright gun turret? You have to work to take down a Guardian, which can withstand a simple knife swipe, unlike the gun turret. Other items include an axe, bouncing betty mine, and shock charge.



HOW SCI-FI ARE YOU?

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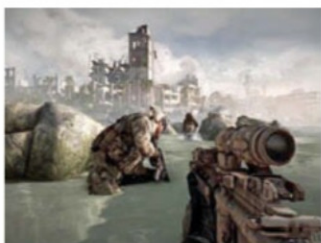


IT'S FULL ON WAR!

BATTLEFIELD 4

INBOUND

Should Call of Duty be afraid? Here's what we know about DICE's plans so far.



1 WORK ON BATTLEFIELD 4 HAS STARTED

"The team is hard at work on the next entry in the *Battlefield* series, and to ensure access to the exclusive *Battlefield 4* beta, shooter fans can pre-order *Medal Of Honor Warfighter* today," said the studio. There is still some DLC for *Battlefield 3* yet to be released but no doubt the team is slowly transitioning over to *Battlefield 4* as and when work on that content is being completed. With just over a year until the beta, development of *Battlefield 4* is sure to be well underway by this point.



2 BATTLEFIELD 3 DLC PLANS UNCHANGED

"With the *Back To Karkand* and *Close Quarters* expansions already out, *Armored Kill* around the corner, and *End Game* and *Aftermath* on the horizon, we're looking forward to hours of gameplay with you, and can't wait to see the stories you will tell through Battlog and player-created videos." We're not sure what 'stories' DICE is expecting us to tell, given the lack of romance options and dinosaurs, but the point is the DLC schedule won't be affected by *Battlefield 4*'s presence.



3 BATTLEFIELD 4 BETA DUE IN FALL 2013

Fall next year starts 22 September and ends 20 December. The *Battlefield 3* beta was out 29 September, so late September makes sense for the *Battlefield 4* beta. EA seems to have *Medal Of Honor* and *Battlefield* on two-year development cycles, similar to Activision's model with *Infinity Ward* and *Treyarch* taking turns with *Call Of Duty*, while it still uses Frostbite and Battlog tech and thus saves R&D time. Expect *Battlefield 4* to release in time for next Christmas.



4 IT COULD HEAD TO PS3 AND PS4

This is the big one. Is *Battlefield 4* a current-gen or next-gen project? The timing of the beta indicates it will be on PlayStation 3 at the very least but with analysts looking at Christmas 2013 as PlayStation 4's launch date, likely the same window that *Battlefield 4* will be released, could *Battlefield 4* be due for PlayStation 4? DICE's history answers this – *Battlefield 2: Modern Combat* was released for Xbox in November 2005 and came to Xbox 360 in April 2006. A similarly staggered release will likely happen here.

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IS IT TOO SOON FOR BATTLEFIELD 4?

6% NO YES 94%



YOUR THOUGHTS

I think they're going the *COD* route of spamming game releases. They should stop and save *BF4* for next gen. *Bad Company 3* can fill the void.

_ZEIKKU

I remember pre-ordering last time and everyone getting access at the same time anyway, pointless.

DSONICX

How much can they really change so soon? I think *BF4* should be kept for next gen, maybe release *Bad Company 3* instead

CRINGLES88

Put the fun back into *Battlefield*. Give the dog-tag leaderboard back!

ASTROMONKEY1980

[I want] Six-player co-op campaign! 3D support! How about a good campaign! Please, please wait until next-gen, don't be greedy!

MACKSIMUSPRYME

Personally, I'd rather have seen them announce *Bad Company 3*

XPERIAHUSKY

A NOVEMBER (AND 2012 EDITION OCTOBER) TO REMEMBER

LAST YEAR WE gave you the chance to trace your Gaming Purchase Likelihood (GPL) using our patent-pending flowchart system and cross-referencing it with the biggest releases in two of the later months in the year. And you know what? We've only gone and done it again. As with last time around, just follow the best path suited to you and find your ideal game in 2012's months of madness.



...YOU HAVE TO WAIT FOR THESE

NEXT YEAR WILL SEE SOME OF THE BIGGEST GAMES RELEASED AND THESE ARE OUR THREE MOST WANTED TITLES OF 2013

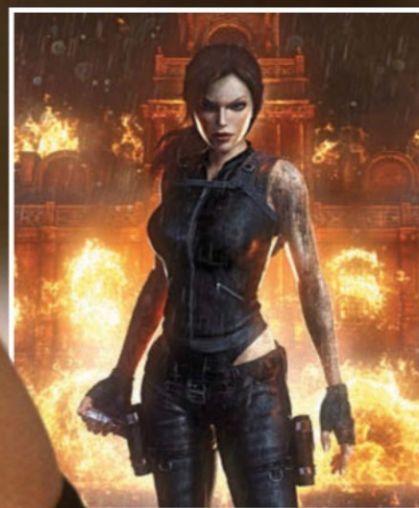


LARA CROFT

Leave it to Germany and Lena Lara to get the best take on English's classic adventurer...

“Lara became my idol and my hero. Who wouldn't want to be like her or have the life she has?”

“If there will ever be a new Tomb Raider movie, I will dress up as her when watching it.”



How long have you been cosplaying as Lara Croft?

About 12 years ago I began to dress up as Lara Croft. I didn't really know anything about cosplaying; at first it was nothing more than a remarkable hobby for me. But over the years the cosplay became a huge meaning for me and my further life.

How long did it take you to create each outfit?

How long it takes is different from outfit to outfit. Mostly, I make several versions of one costume, so it becomes better step-by-step. You can imagine that this process requires much time. The first version of my Underworld outfit came up in the end of 2008, but in 2010 I still worked on a better version of the same outfit.

Where did you get the pistols?

I bought them from eBay, some years ago. They were shipped from the US.

Have you ever gone out dressed up as Lara Croft when doing the shopping or going to the cinema?

No, I only wear it for events and conventions. But if there will ever be a new Tomb Raider movie, I will dress up as her when watching it.

What do people say about your Lara look?

When I was at school, most people sneered at me about my unusual hobby. But now I receive so much positive feedback that I can nearly forget about that period of time. It really means a lot, now I'm proud of what I'm doing. I put a lot of effort into my costumes and I'm glad to see that others can appreciate it.

What do you like most about Lara?

Lara Croft is for me the idealised version of a woman on many levels. She is sexy, intelligent, tough, athletic, cultured, well-travelled, and has this kind of mysterious charm that shines though. I can't see any real woman matching up – but that's the reason why she became my idol and my hero. Who wouldn't want to be like her or have the life she has?

Which Tomb Raider game is your favourite and why?

I'm more a fan of the classic Tomb Raider games, especially Tomb Raider II and III. Of course, the graphics were crap in those days, but I really loved the puzzles and the difficulty level of these games.

“If Call Of Duty getting involved doesn't convince you that e-sports is becoming the next big trend, we don't know what will”



PLAY
SAYS

THE RISE OF E-SPORTS

Can you make money just by being good at games?



THEY SAY A picture is worth a thousand words, which is a good job as we've got a limit of 400 for this column. So just look at that picture. Ignoring the 998 other words you might get from it, the two most important words are 'the future'. Because that's exactly what you are looking at.

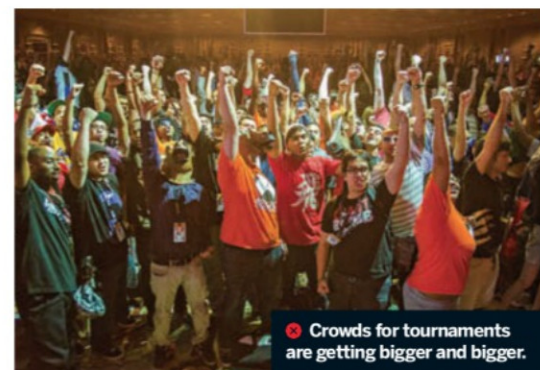
It was taken from this year's Evolution tournament in Las Vegas, shortly after FilipinoChamp won \$15,000 for being the best *Ultimate Marvel Vs Capcom 3* player in the world. While we're talking numbers, because they explain it better than words or pictures can, Evolution had over 5,000 entrants from 40 different countries and prize money totalling \$100,000 across *Super Street Fighter IV*, *Virtua Fighter 5*, *SoulCalibur V*, *Mortal Kombat* and more. That's huge.

E-sports and professional console tournaments are on the rise, and it's not just fighting games either. Even Activision can't ignore the rise of e-sports and is looking to tie it in with *Call Of Duty*. Go back to last month's interview with Treyarch's John Rafacz. Notice how he mentions the team is looking at "the emergence of the competitive gaming scene, and looking at what e-sports has done to evolve the way we look at watching people play online" when considering multiplayer design. If *Call Of Duty*, the biggest gaming series in the world, getting involved doesn't convince you that e-sports is becoming console gaming's next big trend, we don't know what will.

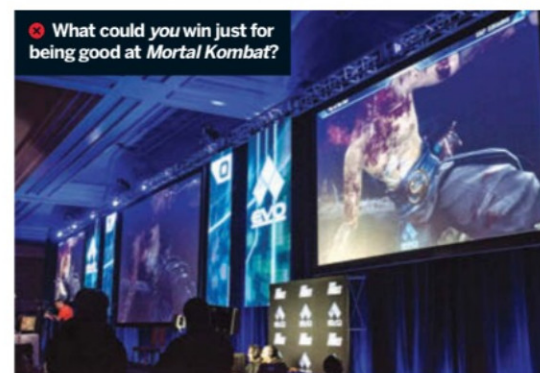
"But **Play**, I'll never be good enough to be the best in the world!" you cry, biting your lower lip in frustration. You're missing the big

picture. As more companies wake up to the potential of multiplayer tournaments on console – and it's taken them a while but it's finally happening – that means more events at local levels. Gamerbase hosts console tournaments. Retail stores often do for big launches of competitive games. Sure, being the best in the world is tough. But the best in Boscombe, or Barnet, or wherever? That's easy enough for you to walk away with a new arcade stick or console or whatever is on offer. That's your first step to world domination and it's a step that didn't even exist as recently as five years ago.

So get practicing. It's already happening. The movement is in place. *Street Fighter*, *Call Of Duty*, whatever. You never know what rewards you might find just for being good at games...



✖ Crowds for tournaments are getting bigger and bigger.



✖ What could you win just for being good at *Mortal Kombat*?

CRYISIS 3

Crytek's shooter is aiming for the top. Will it hit the target?

STEALTH OR AGGRESSION?

Crysis 2 heavily favoured the stealth approach, particularly on higher difficulties, and *Crysis 3* will look to address that balance. Yet even if it is balanced, it will be interesting to see how Crytek makes the all-out assault option feel as satisfying and fun as sneaking around and being stealthy with the bow.

WHAT'S THE STORY?

We're not sure how much people care about story in shooty-bang games outside of *BioShock* and *Deus Ex* but regardless, you play as Prophet, who returns to New York in the year 2047 on a revenge mission, fighting a corrupt Cell Corporation. Hmm. May be hard to care about the story in this one too.

ARROW THROUGH MY HEART

It fits in with the stealth aspect of *Crysis*, but there's something more important than that. Think of the force with which the arrow will slam into enemies, hurling them backwards and smashing them into walls, cars, trees and so on. This is where Crytek will work its visual magic, making you wince at the impact.

SHOT LIKE A FILM

"We've decided to change the fundamentals of how we make cinematics, and are now staging the characters as actors," says *Crysis 3*'s cinematic director, Steven Bender. "This way, the likenesses, voices, and facial expressions of the cast come together like a scene on a stage, much like a director would shoot a feature film."

ENGINE MAY CRY

Crysis 3 is going to be powered by CryEngine 3, which has been built for open-world gameplay and to push the visuals that have defined the series thus far. We have full confidence that Crytek will nail how the game looks, but the bigger issue will be how Crytek handles the AI.

ALMOST THERE

"Some poor design choices and a bizarre level of bugginess let the whole thing down," wrote our very own Ian Dransfield about *Crysis 2*, before smacking its bum with a 72% sticker. "Close but not quite there." Can *Crysis 3* overcome the wonky design and AI issues that plagued its predecessor?

IS IT LINEAR?

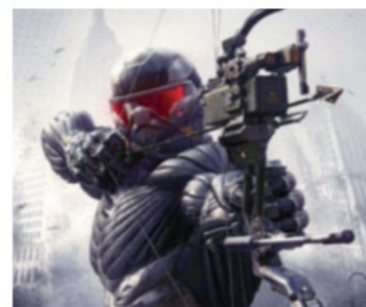
"At the core of the storyline in *Crysis 3*, as with the two prior, is a very linear experience," explains Crytek. "This time around, we think people are going to be very pleased with how we have created more depth and interactions between the characters." From the sound of it, some of the linearity will be back...

IS IT NON-LINEAR?

...but Crytek has at least offered a vague promise of more open-ended gameplay, even if it is a token gesture. "Creating a unique environment like the urban rainforest has allowed us to [...] create a sense of openness where the player has various options in the way they tackle the action sequences in the game."

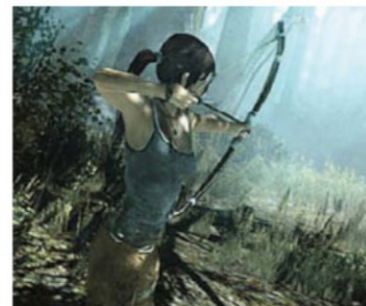
BOW & ARROWS

They're gaming's new trend, but how do they actually differ?



CRYISIS 3 EXPLOSIVE ARROWS

It can be used as a stealth weapon, but with *Crysis 3*, the bow and arrow is used as a vehicle for Crytek to show off its impressive mastery of visuals and physics. Helicopters will be taken down, and characters thrown against the environment with the force of the bow.



TOMB RAIDER PISTOLS REPLACEMENT

This is young, unsure Lara, and she hasn't developed her backflipping-with-dual-pistols confidence yet. Instead, her first foray into killing is with a bow and arrow as she hunts for food. Later, she's seen killing men with the bow and arrow. So yes. Pistols replacement.



ASSASSIN'S CREED III ASSASSINATION TOOL

Seems obvious, given the title, but Connor has bow and arrows available as an assassination tool. We've seen him pull off a jumping kill with the weapon in the CGI trailers. Will this be part of the gameplay too?



FAR CRY 3 CAUSE INJURY

Far Cry takes place in the jungle, and so the bow and arrow fits in thematically. What's interesting is how they don't kill outright. Bar headshots, we presume. And... uh... heartshots. Instead, arrows injure enemies, setting them up for a big kill with a knife lunge or similar.

TOP 5

HD REMASTERS

HD remasters are extremely popular these days because they're both cheap to make and can be incredibly profitable. Here are our top five so far, and if you disagree we will fight you because there are no opinions, only **Play** FACTS



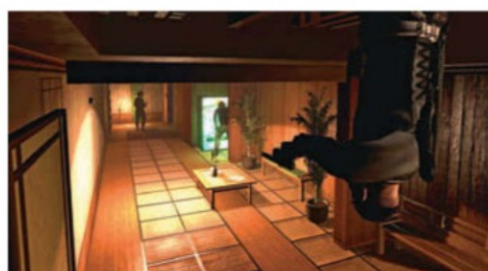
1 METAL GEAR SOLID HD COLLECTION

Developed by HD remaster-master Bluepoint Games, which also did the *God Of War Collection*, *MGS HD* looks absolutely magnificent and runs just as well. Yeah, Konami's original assets were already beautiful, but compared to, say, Capcom's output, this is in another league. *MGS3* in particular looks as good today as it did at launch.



2 GOD OF WAR COLLECTION

Another Bluepoint conversion, another example on how to do the job properly. Similar to *MGS*, the *God Of War* games have always looked brilliant, but Bluepoint really went to town converting them. With *God Of War III* not being as good as its predecessor, it's good to have that particular classic in HD on PS3.



4 SPLINTER CELL CLASSIC TRILOGY HD COLLECTION

Even if the first two games in the collection look like a bag of old poo, that doesn't stop *Chaos Theory* from being really rather beautiful, with the remaster putting the series' famed lighting and shadow tech to good use. Oh, and the game's good too.



3 THE RATCHET & CLANK TRILOGY: CLASSICS HD

A new arrival on the HD remaster scene, this collection of the first three games starts poorly – a low-res opening cut-scene gives a bad first impression – but then redeems itself thanks to beautiful in-game graphics. Sharp colours and crisp geometry help matters no end, leading to lovely conversions of some of PS2's most beloved games.



5 ICO & SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS: CLASSICS HD

If you don't already own this, then **Play** is going to come around to your house and burn the whole neighbourhood. Send a message, yeah? Two of PlayStation 2's most haunting games, now better. Do it.

TEAM PICKS Our favourite HD remasters



STEVE PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 6

All right, it's not technically an HD remaster, but seeing as I've got a launch PS3, I can play this in upscale-o-rama. BANG.



RYAN SUPER STREET FIGHTER II TURBO HD REMIX

In case you weren't aware by us mentioning it every issue, I'm the man at fighting games. All of them. Hence this.



IAN JAK AND DAXTER COLLECTION

Because, well, it looks really nice. Why else would I like HD remasters? Oh, the games themselves. Right.



ANDY THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM

No, not on PS3: on PC, and, of course, I'm about to install some high-res texture packs to make it look even better. Of course.

ANATOMY OF...

Resident Evil's steroid-addled saviour has fallen off the wagon in *RE6*, hitting the bottle in Eastern Europe with all the verve of a rugby team on a stag do in Prague. But what else stands out about *Resi*'s hardest man?

CHRIS REDFIELD

GUNS No, we don't mean firearms; we simply mean *arms*. Chris Redfield looks like he's got two late Nineties era Scott Steiners hanging from his shoulders. Not that his grotesque physicality is just for show, like boy band members and footballers. Not only does he use these arms for punching the entire population of an African nation, but he's so strong that he punches boulders out of the way with the same ease that most people save for simply hating themselves. How did Redfield achieve such power? Pre-*Resi 5* he was a scrawny all-American with hair like a Fifties crooner. By the time *Resi 5* rolled around, he looked like a sack of marbles inside a balloon. Steroids, is what we're trying to say.

BRAIIIIIIIIINS After Chris's men got killed at the beginning of *RE6*, it all got a bit too much for Action Man, and if we're honest we can hardly blame him. Not 30 at the time of the original mansion incident, he had to see friends die, contend with shambling corpses and, worst of all, battle giant spiders. Which, considering certain members of the **Play** team have refused to sleep in rooms because they *think* a normal spider *might* be in there, is saying something. So no wonder he's so messed up. But come on, Chris. You're American. You're not some whiny European. Don't let this get you down, buddy. Remember the good old days, like when you saw your buddies eaten alive, or when your sister just disappeared never to be seen again.

FOREIGN LEGION Despite his drinking approaching levels that Alcoholics Anonymous might describe as 'alarming', Redfield is still employed by the BSAA, an international anti bio-terrorist agency and strong favourite to win world's worst acronym at this year's awards. (The award previously went to Citizens Raging Against Phones.) BSAA was the organisation responsible for leading the counter-attack on Albert Wesker's plans to infect the world with the Uroboros virus, and its ranks seem to have swelled now that the entire world is engulfed in bio-terrorist activity. All well and good, but what we really want to see is the reformation of the STARS dream team: Jill, Chris, Barry, Rebecca. Okay, maybe not Rebecca, but Barry especially; the bearded genius has been MIA for far too long.

FAMILY TIES One of *Resident Evil*'s longest-running feuds came to a head at the finale of *Resident Evil 5*, with Chris and arch-nemesis Albert Wesker facing off to the death. Chris won, of course, with a little help from a rocket launcher, a helicopter, and a volcano, as was stipulated in the pre-match rules. Thing is, with his natural enemy vanquished, who's next for Chris? Every hero needs a villain. Ada Wong, probably, as he's shown trying to... uh... shoot her face to pieces in the trailer. But could it also be Jake Muller, Wesker's son? Maybe. But Muller doesn't seem to even be aware that he's got a famous dad, let alone that he might be expected to engage in some inter-generational grudge match.

CHANGING ROOMS

Chris Redfield hasn't always looked like this, of course. It took a few years of dodgy experimentation to get his current look perfected...



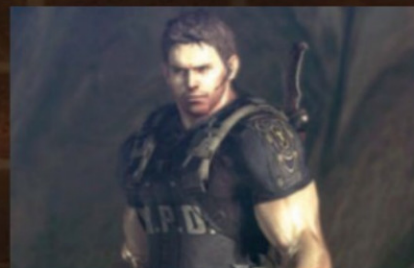
RESIDENT EVIL

Armed with cigarettes and hair you only ever see in Maplins, Chris Redfield didn't get his survival horror career off to the best of starts. At least he seems to have kicked the smoking habit.



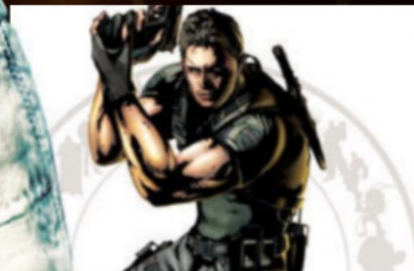
RESIDENT EVIL 3

Hanging around cafes, penning letters, and wearing a tank top with a brown leather jacket. That's everything on the foreign student cliché box ticked, except for smoking. Maybe he kicked that habit a little early. Working lungs are better than looking cool. We think.



RESIDENT EVIL 5

Chris signed up to Fitness First (he took the yearly contract for a discount and free towel), thus his arms exploded into meaty tree trunks. Marginal improvement over the fags-and-Rustler's-burgers lifestyle of OG Chris.



MARVEL VS CAPCOM 3

Cartoon Chris is a little slimmer than his *Resi 5* counterpart, presumably because no artist in the world has been taught how to draw muscles that big.

Re:Play

You are the controller! But only on these pages

Lots of *Call Of Duty*, lots of Vita. Does no-one want to discuss *Frontlines*? Or PSP? No? Sigh. In other news, we did earn someone a degree. Pretty much by ourselves. We think.

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play@imagine-publishing.co.uk

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Imagine Publishing
Richmond House
33 Richmond Hill
Bournemouth
Dorset
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CAN VITA DO OPEN WORLD?

Love your mag but I'll get straight down to business. Recently I've been indulging myself in the ultimate *Fallout: New Vegas* binge and I have to say I'm enjoying it, even though I did somehow screw up *Honest Hearts* because Tribals killed all my caravan members, but anyway. After playing a game like *Fallout* and *Skyrim*, it makes me not want to play on my Vita because all of the games are too structured, too linear, and just too damn boring! Where are the Vita's open world

games like *Just Cause*, *Fallout*, *Elder Scrolls* and *GTA*, to name a few?

I don't mean old ports like *GTA: Vice City Stories* or the likes; I mean a proper open world Vita game! Or do we have to wait to see if they release some kind of *GTA V* spin-off for the Vita? I know the Vita has enough hardware; I just wish developers would grow the balls to actually try getting to grips with new software that could potentially be the next big thing. If developers actually developed correctly and strayed from too structured gameplay then the Vita could really be pushed

and set free in a sense. I'm looking forward to seeing what *Assassin's Creed III: Liberation* and *Black Ops: Declassified* will bring to the Vita's arsenal because it needs some big-hitting titles, and the possibility of multiplayer battles on the move is mind-blowing.

It is, however, the gaming lull, and seeing as there is

nothing particularly interesting out at the moment I suppose I can hold on until the big releases in November if I have to. But I want some form of compensation that isn't some s***ty free bonus extra exclusive character skin that does absolutely nothing to affect the overall game! Argh! I hate crap DLC as a bonus! Lazy developers thinking they can trick us into buying early and actually getting nothing other than some useless and mostly crap artwork! Damn, this has sort of turned into two letters, and I've drifted from my original point again...

Ah, hell, I can't even remember what it was but I know that it was a good one and I'll still defend it to the death!

Jamie Green

Open world games do take longer to develop than other games and that's particularly true when new technology is involved, which is the case with Vita. The launch titles have to be made in a smaller window than usual, which is why the initial launch line-up isn't too hot. It's a shame, but there's nothing that can be done.



STAR LETTER



PLAY GETS YOU DEGREES

I know it isn't really gaming-related, but I am writing to thank my boyfriend and long-time **Play** fan, Lee Heather, and gaming in general. Lee has supported me throughout my biology degree, not complaining while I have been camped out on Microsoft Word for days, and nights, at a time (I know... so rock and roll), or listening to me rant and rave all things biological at him, or parenting when I have moved from the home PC to the library to work, and so on. If it weren't for gaming, and **Play**, I am sure I would have turned him insane long ago! I know most boyfriends are getting a hard time lately for not being a certain Mr

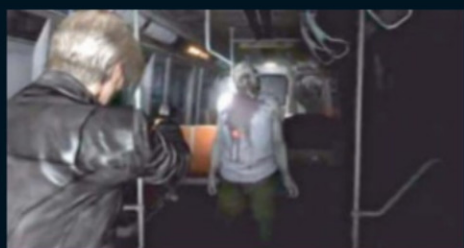
Grey, but thanks to Lee and you guys I now have a good degree! Also, *God Of War* gaming rage has to be the worst rage of all the games I have listened to!

Chelle Partridge

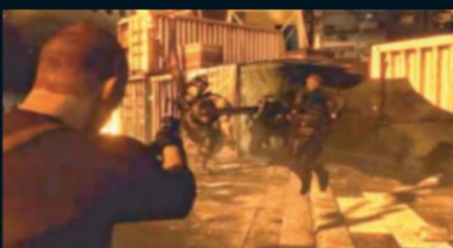
Lee was one of the first people to support Play's official Facebook page (facebook.com/PlayMagazineUK), so this warms our cold, cynical, long-frozen hearts. Well done you and well done Lee. Just keep *God Of War* away from him, yeah? LEE. We know you're reading this. PLAY JOURNEY.

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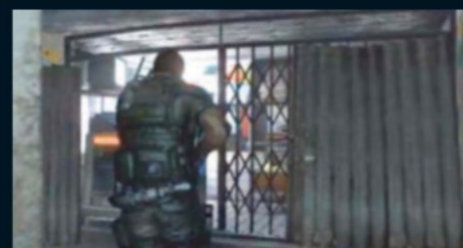
Things you may have missed on our YouTube page



RESIDENT EVIL 6
LEON PLAYTHROUGH



RESIDENT EVIL 6
JAKE PLAYTHROUGH



RESIDENT EVIL 6
CHRIS PLAYTHROUGH



Write in, and win! Every letter we print receives a free game. This month, the prize is the staggeringly brilliant *Darkstalkers II*. THQ's action adventure is out now and worth buying, which you'd know if you read our exclusive review, which you did if you're a true **Play** superfan. Which you are. Right?



PS VITA CONCERNS

Thought I would write to see your views on the PS Vita and games. I've had the Vita since launch and have only bought one decent game for it: *Uncharted*. I played this to completion. I've rented a few games like *Lumines*, *ModNation Racers*, *Little Deviants* and *Gravity Rush*. I just don't think they are any good. *Paint Park* and the free games off PSN for Vita are not too good either. Where are all of the good games? Are they

bringing any good adventure games out or is Vita going the same way the PSP did?

Amanda

There are good games you haven't played yet – *Everybody's Golf*, *Mortal Kombat*, *WipEout 2048*, *Metal Gear Solid HD Collection* and *Rayman Origins*. But now developers have had more time, better games will come out. Expect *BioShock* on Vita to be the start of big things for the little format.

THE BIG ISSUE CALL OF DUTY VS PS3

I go on *Modern Warfare 3* multiplayer often and always buy new DLC maps when they are released but my patience is running thin on the waiting time. Xbox 360 always get the maps a month early leaving PlayStation 3 players bored and neglected. I found out that Terminal from *Modern Warfare 2* was coming out on *Modern Warfare 3* for free and that it was released on 17 July for Xbox 360. I rushed into the store with high hopes to find out that the free map is being released for PlayStation 3 a month later and that Microsoft have already made a deal to get *Black Ops 2* DLC packs before PlayStation 3. *Call Of Duty* is simply ignoring all PlayStation 3 players without any regard. I'm so annoyed that I'm not getting *Black Ops 2*. Take that, *Call Of Duty*.

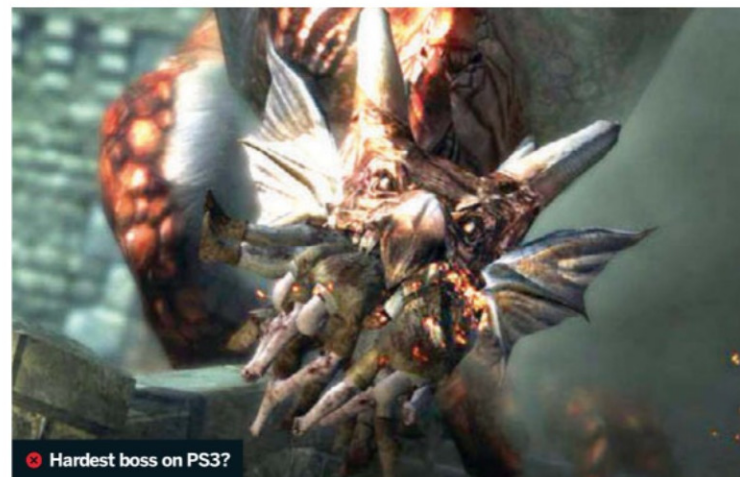
Reece Ward

It's something Microsoft is doing more and more to compensate for the lack of exclusive games. The weird thing is it doesn't really seem to affect anything, except bragging rights for Xbox 360 owners. We doubt anyone would buy an Xbox 360 to get Tony Hawk's Pro Skater HD a month earlier, for example, so all it does is leave a bad taste in the mouths of PlayStation 3 owners. Which isn't a great way to do business. Would you prefer exclusives like *The Last Of Us*, *God Of War: Ascension* and *Beyond* or to get some DLC a month earlier? Exactly. At least after a month, we'll have the DLC AND the exclusives.

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We take to our Facebook army made up of our nearest and dearest to ask...



Hardest boss on PS3?



Play

What are the hardest PS3/PSN games?

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Ian White Probably *Demon's Souls*. Harder than *Dark Souls* anyway.

Dan Hinchcliffe *Dead Nation* on Undead mode.

Ben Child *Call Of Duty 1* drove me mental on higher difficulties and haven't played it for months because the AI can practically see you through walls.

Tasha Fay Monteith *Dark Souls* or *Demon's Souls*, no doubt.

Megan Roaring Lyons *Final Fantasy XIII-2* on Expert.

Malcolm Brown Has to be *Dark Souls* or *Demon's Souls*. One false move and you die. Them two games are as hard as nails.

Kenneth Rae *Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2* for PS3 on the hardest difficulty setting.

Yasmin McGregor I actually own some of the hardest games. *Bayonetta*, *Devil May Cry*, *Dark Souls* and *Demon's Souls*. One hell of a challenge, wouldn't you say?

Carly Jones *Max Payne 3*, New York Minute Hardcore! Where you play each chapter in under a minute and can't die! If you do you must start from Chapter 1 again.

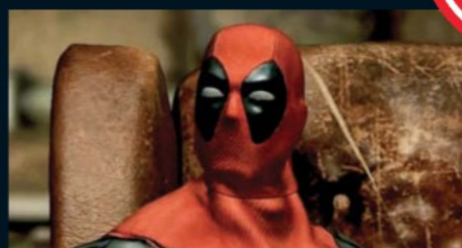


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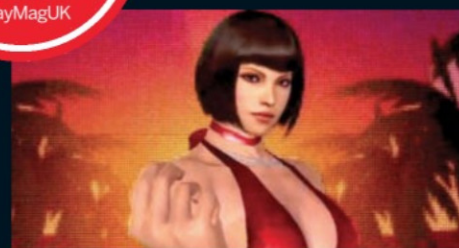
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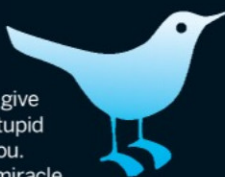
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The Play team talks games every month
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CALL OF DUTY DEFENCE FORCE

I was wondering why I always hate the games that the critics love, and love the games that the critics hate. I absolutely loved *Call Of Duty: World At War*. It was my favourite COD game, yet it managed to get the abysmal score of 68%, and for the life of me I cannot tell you what everyone thought was so wrong with it. Then there is *Duke Nukem Forever*, which despite bearing a score of 33%, was very enjoyable for me. It was just a bit of fun if the TV was muted and you interacted with as few wall boobs and urinals as possible, and it felt like it belonged in 1998, when it was SUPPOSED to belong. Then, there is *Assassin's Creed*, which managed to get a 58%. Some people were left unimpressed with that game, but I don't see why, because it was fun and it had the least amount of Desmond compared to any of the other games.

There was also *Rage* (68%), which was a solid game that everyone expected to be like *Fallout 3.5* and were really pissed off about, but I think it hit that nail on the head, with relatively

enjoyable races, spot-on shooting and a cool story. And, perhaps the flagship of my 'Why did you like that?' games, *Lord Of The Rings: War In The North*. I think it is brilliant, but that is probably because of the nostalgia of old games like *King Arthur* on the PS2 – again crappy, to your standards – which I really enjoyed because of the combat and the environment and all of that.

Now onto the hates. I was absolutely astonished about how much I hated *Metal Gear Solid 4*. I can understand that it is a good game, but I would really need to see someone who loves these games to see what is so enjoyable about them, because it isn't exactly descriptive about your objectives and controls, and I gave up reading instruction manuals in the Christmas of 2010. I really don't think it deserved a 94% score. Then, there is *L.A. Noire*, which you gave a 91%. I think of myself as a patient gamer. I have aced *Hitman* and *Splinter Cell* games time and time again without differing from the stealthy path, and I loved *Monkey Island* and those kinds of games, so I'm no stranger to point-and-click games, but for the life of me, *L.A. Noire* was absolute s***. I do NOT

want to tilt someone's head and hands around 40 times then complete the game. And driving between objectives is not a fun thing to do. This is the only time Rockstar has cheated me out of money, so why did it have to be \$50? I would be more inclined to spend \$15 on *Rogue Warrior* than *L.A. Noire*!

Then, finally, there is *Uncharted 2: Among Thieves*. Now, before you set your computers alight with rage, hear me out. I liked this game up until about 15 minutes in, because at the point of needing to break into the museum, Drake takes 1,000 years to knock someone out, he can't shoot straight, stealth is a joke and parkour in these games doesn't work. I am sure I would enjoy it if I could play it more, but I can't be bothered getting to the next point in any of these games, and I have tried on a number of occasions, believe me.

Thomas Davis

Few points. Firstly, 68% isn't an abysmal score. It's above average. Then there's modern retro done well (*Velocity*, *Mega Man 9*) and modern retro done badly. *Duke Nukem Forever* is an example of the latter. No one expected *Rage* to be *Fallout 3.5*, given its history either.

"I would be more inclined to spend \$15 on *Rogue Warrior* than *L.A. Noire*!" This might be the most hyperbolic statement anyone has ever made, including everything Ashley Day of **games™** has ever said. Point is, it's horses for courses. We all have our 'awful' games we like – Ryan liked *Warriors Orochi*, Ian liked *Manhunt*, Steve liked *Kane & Lynch 2*. We're all different. Just remember to read the review text along with the score to see how that conclusion was reached.

PLAY-MAG.CO.UK

HDTV DESTROYED RHYTHM ACTION

We often wonder what happened to *PaRappa The Rapper*. We haven't seen the little guy kicking and punching since the PSP version came out in 2007, and that was just a remake of the first game. Turns out there's a reason for this according to one former NanaOn-Sha employee. Dewi Tanner, writing on *Edge*, has pointed the blame squarely at HDTVs. "Modern TVs suffer from high amounts of display lag, commonly termed 'latency' – usually more than 60 milliseconds, but latencies of 100ms+ are not uncommon. For a 60fps game, 60ms lag equates to an event happening on-screen four frames after your input is detected. For performance genres – like rhythm games, and beat-'em-ups where a single frame can be the difference between a high score and game over – this lag is obviously of serious detriment to the game experience. In the past most CRT TVs were innately capable of this due to the simplicity of their design. I've actually already met a few gamers who have kept their old CRTs for classic rhythm gaming, so if you

still have one gathering dust in the spare room, think twice before you bin it in the future!"

Anyone who's downloaded *UmJammer Lammy* from the US Store, or simply booted up their PSone copies of *PaRappa The Rapper* (let's ignore the sequel) is likely to know exactly what Tanner is talking about. It's just off. *Guitar Hero* and its friends worked around this problem, but were never able to fix it per se. And that's sad because it means we're unlikely to get a PS3 version of *PaRappa*.



THE COMPETITION CORNER

NEED FOR SPEED: THE RUN STREET FIGHTER X TEKKEN BODYCOUNT

These could be the most redundant words in the magazine. Perhaps the *only* redundant words in the magazine, we'd even say, stroking our own ego like a supervillain strokes a particularly fluffy puss. But let's go with most. The point stands. Who reads these words? Do you all just delve straight into the gladiator pit below and take part in the test of wits that stands between you and the prize below? Such a cruel world when our perfectly formed verbal thrusts of art are ignored.

WHERE IS JURI FROM?

A) Korea B) Lapland C) Barnet

Pop your answer and address in an email to play@imagine-publishing.co.uk with the subject header 'Your words make me cry and tingle in strange places'. Closing date is 27 September 2012. The winner will be notified by email. Next month: Worms stuff (hopefully). Farewell!



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You ask us questions, we reply on Twitter, then we reply here so everyone else can see, then you ask us more questions. Join in at @PlayMag_UK! Or don't...

@MOOGLET I heard *Chrono Cross* is coming to EU PSN. If this is true, and not just a silly rumour, DO YOU KNOW WHEN?

No idea. Sony usually doesn't publish release dates for PlayStation back catalogue releases. Not even sure if it'll come out on EU PSN, although the *Chrono Cross* trademark has been registered in Europe, so...

@KITTLE11 Where would you like the next *Elder Scrolls* game to be? Steve: "My hometown of St Neots." Ian: "Swansea. Or elsewhere, where the thingies are from. You know, the cat people. Desertland or something. Or just Swansea." Nick (of NowGamer): "Los Santos." Ryan: "KFC."

@GAR_M77 In a word, how would you describe *Lost Planet 2*? Cold.

@ALEXSKINNER95 There are four Horsemen, meaning there should be two more games after *Darksiders II*? Or maybe a fifth to end the story? Depends on how much it sells. THQ needs some moneymakers, and if *Darksiders II* sells well enough, you can bet there will be a third. Still, it will be a bit stuck when it has to do a *Darksiders* game about Famine, eh?

@C1892J *Pure Football 2*. When? No, no, no, that's just a sick joke. *Hitman HD Collection*. Real? Apparently. And also supposedly due out mid-October.

@OZZIE99_MCGILL Will *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* be released on PS Store any time soon?

It's rated by ESRB for re-release, so... soon. Though probably nearer *Grand Theft Auto V*'s release so Rockstar can build hype. *Grand Theft Auto III* is out on American PSN Store, so movement is happening with those games.

@IN_ENGLAND Does the PS3 need *The Last Guardian*? All I know is I want it! *The Last Guardian* is the game PlayStation 3 deserves but not the one it needs right now. PlayStation 4 launch title, maybe? Stranger things have happened. Like that thing with the three donkeys. And the cheese.



PLAY

Imagine Publishing Ltd
Richmond House 33 Richmond Hill
Bournemouth Dorset BH2 6EZ
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586200
Web: www.play-mag.co.uk
www.imagine-publishing.co.uk
www.greatdigitalmags.com

Magazine team

Editor Ryan King
ryan.king@imagine-publishing.co.uk
☎ 01202 586 241
Senior Designer Andy Salter
Senior Staff Writers Ian Dransfield, Steve Burns
Sub Editor Rebecca Richards
Editor In Chief Rick Porter
Head of Publishing Aaron Asadi
Head of Design Ross Andrews

Contributor

Adam Barnes

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Advertising

Digital or printed media packs are available on request.

Head of Sales Hang Deretz

☎ 01202 586442
hang.deretz@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Account Manager Emma Tyrer

☎ 01202 586430
emma.tyrer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Advertising Sales Executive Richard Rust

☎ 01202 586436
richard.rust@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Advertising Sales Executive Greg Reed

☎ 01202 586434
greg.reed@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Cover disc

Head of Digital Mat Toor

Digital Projects Co-ordinator Steve Litton
playxtrahelp@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Multimedia Editor Matt Deeble

International

Play is available for licensing. Contact the International department to discuss partnership opportunities.

Head of International Licensing Cathy Blackman

☎ +44 (0) 1202 586401
licensing@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Subscriptions

Head of Subscriptions Lucy Nash

subscriptions@imagine-publishing.co.uk

For all Subscription Enquiries

Email play@servicehelpline.co.uk

☎ UK 0844 848 8404

☎ Overseas +44 1795 592 875

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Circulation

Head of Circulation Darren Pearce

☎ 01202 586200

Production

Production Director Jane Hawkins

☎ 01202 586200

Founders

Damian Butt Group Managing Director

Steven Boyd Group Finance & Commercial Director

Mark Kendrick Group Creative Director

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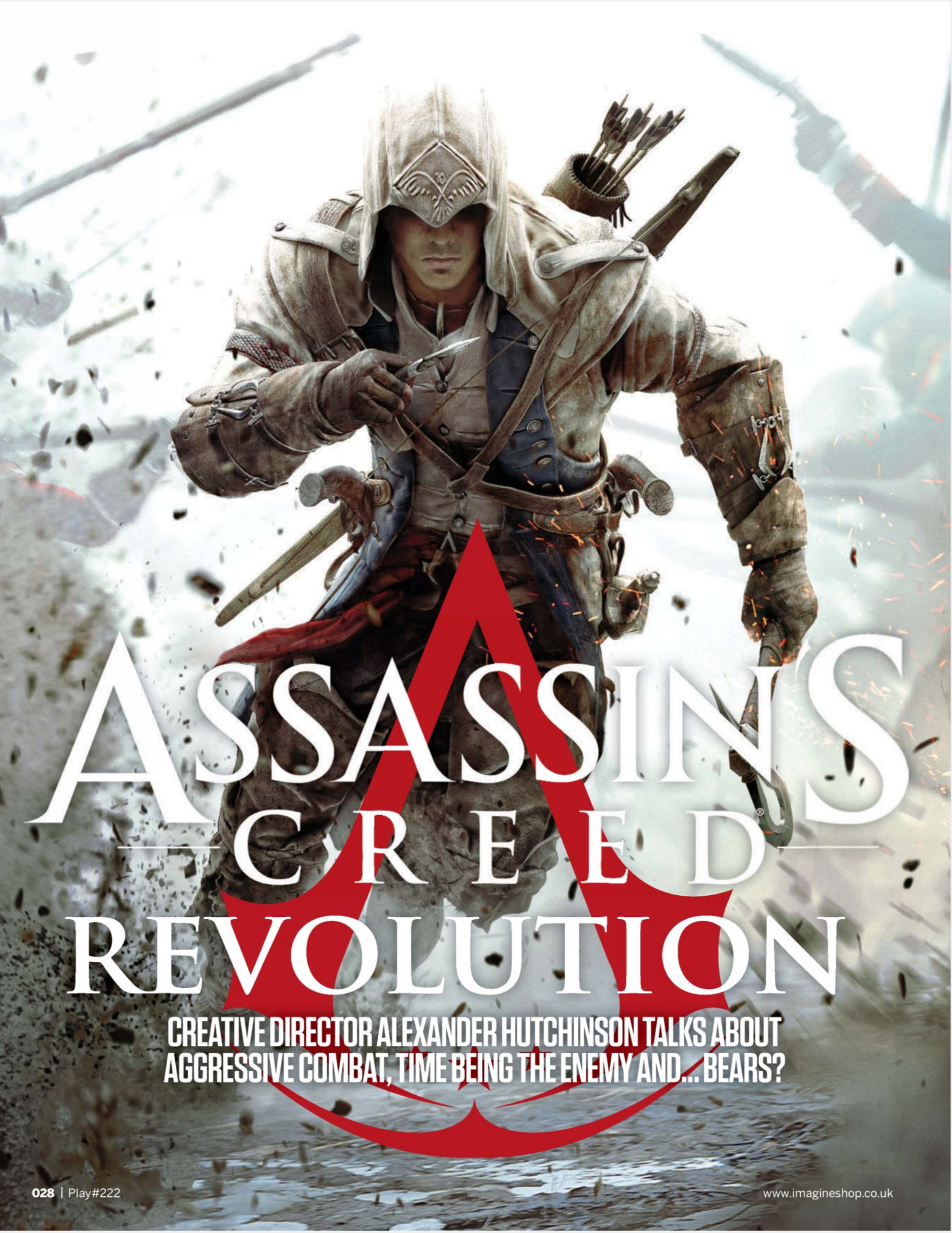
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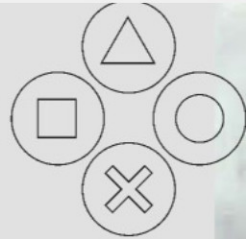
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ASSASSIN'S CREED REVOLUTION

CREATIVE DIRECTOR ALEXANDER HUTCHINSON TALKS ABOUT
AGGRESSIVE COMBAT, TIME BEING THE ENEMY AND... BEARS?

ASSASSIN'S CREED III



SKULKING IN THE SHADOWS, STALKING ON THE PLAINS, STRIDING THROUGH A COLONIST'S HOUSE – ASSASSIN'S CREED III IS A REBIRTH FOR A FORMULA THAT WAS GETTING STALE. BUT IS IT, LIKE ITS SETTING, A TRUE REVOLUTION?



✖ Connor has mastery over the natural environment. (He can climb trees.)



Assassin's Creed III isn't a reboot, or a reimagining, or a remake, or a re-anything. It's just a sequel. So why does it feel so vastly different to the last couple of entries to the series? Why does it feel like a game we actually care about, that we actually want to play, rather than something that fills us with an inescapable ennui?

Because it's just a sequel. Because it just feels vastly different to the last couple of entries to the series. Because it's something we *want* to care about. *Assassin's Creed III* isn't a case of reinventing the wheel; it's a case of using the wheel properly for the first time in years, instead of getting distracted by shiny objects, tower defence or first-person *Tetris* sections.

Alexander Hutchinson, creative director on *Assassin's Creed III*, is all too aware of the unique problems presented by the series. "It's hard to remove things when it's the same character and a direct continuation of the previous game, so having Connor and a clean slate let us step back," he said. "But also, we had more time than the recent entries and we wanted to make the most of it. I really believe each game should have its own unique elements that don't pass into the others; they should be part of a franchise, but they should be their own games with their own unique mechanics and stories."

Hutchinson keenly pointed out that this 'blank slate' by no means indicates a game lacking in size or scope. "The game is huge – in physical size, play time and in the amount of new gameplay we packed in. We stripped out a lot of mechanics and systems from previous games but I think we are still pushing the maximum possible scope: there is only so much you can juggle in your mind simultaneously, and only so much variety you can add before it starts to feel random and not cohesive." He added an interesting consideration the team has to factor in: "We have a very high completion rate on the franchise, and if you make it too long you start to lose that, which would >



✖ If you're able to hide in plain sight as a snowman we will be very happy indeed.



“ One of our goals with this game was huge variety, so sometimes you’re hunting animals from the branches in the frontier, then you’re hunting Templars on rooftops in New York ”

> be a disaster for a game like ours where we really value the consistency and continuity of the universe.”

But the *Assassin's Creed* series is one that has split audiences with its extra content – some see it as necessary for providing an experience that lasts beyond its central story, others seeing it as unnecessary and overused padding that adds little of interest. Hutchinson wasn't blind to these concerns. “The feeling of a game having ‘padding’ is usually about repetition: you sense that you’re repeating tasks over and over. One of our goals with this game was huge variety, so sometimes you’re hunting animals from the branches in the frontier, then you’re hunting Templars on rooftops in New York, then you’re commanding your warship out at sea, so I think we’re good in terms of repetition.”

Assassin's Creed III is still the longest game in the series so far, but bringing things back to the core concepts, we find systems have been changed, even where we thought they would be left the same as before. Gone are the days of endlessly turtling in combat, waiting for the enemy to attack, then countering for visually spectacular, but ultimately unsatisfying, combat. “In general we just wanted to reward aggressive play. You can still turtle a little, but you are rewarded for combining that with aggression in *ACIII*,” Hutchinson said. He continued: “We wanted it to be simple to survive a fight but difficult to kill everyone in one fluid chain; people will attack you while you’re attacking someone else, they will attack in pairs sometimes, they will shoot at you as well as using close combat moves, and we rebuilt everything from the weapons, to the camera to the strategy. We wanted it to be chunky to play and rhythmic and beautiful.”

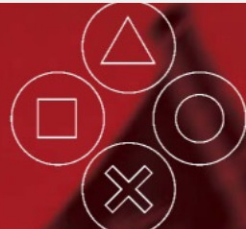
Such an ethos could be hard to get across to a large development team – near impossible to get across to multiple teams the size of which Ubisoft has working on *Assassin's Creed III*. But Hutchinson doesn't see this as the case. “It sounds like a lot but it's really a Montreal production for all the core gameplay, the core story missions, the three main worlds and the game structure, so that's the heart of the game.” Though this isn't to say the other teams don't contribute a lot. “Singapore prototyped the naval gameplay here in Montreal with us a few years back, then took ownership back to their team there. Annecy is working on the multiplayer as always, and the Quebec City studio has a done a great job on some secret stuff we're not talking about.” Secret stuff? Yeah, he wouldn't tell us.



As the *Assassin's* series moves forward through history, things become more complicated. No longer is it just a case of steel-on-steel, for now we have to contend with a world rife with firearms. How can a man, such as our hero Connor, cope with such fearsome odds pointed his way? Again, it's a concern Hutchinson and his team has had to contend with: “At first it seemed like guns would break the game and take us away from hand-to-hand fighting, but research showed that it took so long to reload that soldiers usually switched to bayonets. This meant we could create a system where if you stayed at range they were a big threat but if you could avoid the first volley, you could charge in and take them on in close combat.”

Though, not to hammer home the point too much, Hutchinson maintained elements like widespread use of guns don't change *Assassin's Creed III*'s core tenets. “The general principles of a game built around combat, navigation and social stealth stay true but we rebuilt all of those systems to be new and fresh. We also kept the idea of building and creating your environment and gaining allies, but both are again completely new in their implementation. But brand elements like the leap of >





THE KILLER AMONG US

ALTAIR, THEN EZIO, NOW CONNOR – BUT WHAT'S DIFFERENT?

WHITES OF HIS EYES

Born and adopting the moniker of Connor, our murderous protagonist has both Native American and British heritage. What does this mean? It means some split loyalties – though all we've seen of him so far is murdering Redcoats (ie the British).

AXE COP

As stated in the main feature, *Assassin's Creed III* approaches combat in a less defensive, more aggressive and flowing fashion. As such, Connor has been created with more melee combat options in mind – meaning he's pretty badass at wielding two weapons at once. Which is always nice.

BELT UP

A member of the Assassin's Order since 1770, Connor is driven by the need for justice. While Altaïr was a man of duty and Ezio's motivation was revenge, Ratoñhake:ton strives for fairness and equal treatment for his Mohawk people. It also means he wears a natty belt buckle.

FLEET

Connor is one nimble little blighter and, for the first time in the series, is capable of climbing more than just buildings. Yes, you can combine the childhood delight of climbing a tree with the adult delight of murdering your targets (if you're an assassin in real life, that is).

BOW-BACKED

Both down to the time period of *ACIII* and his heritage, Connor is a man of far more ranged combat skills than previous series protagonists. Whether wielding a bow and arrow, flintlock pistol or rifle, he's just as deadly from afar as he is close up.

WRIST ACTION

For all the talk of ranged weapons and stand-up melee combat, Connor is still an assassin and still wields the hidden blade, as used to generally stab people in the neck. A single blade in the first game, double blades in the second... triple in the third? Probably not.



Multiplayer still plays a big part in proceedings, though we haven't seen much of it yet.



Can anyone else say "formative experience of his youth"? No? Just us?





✖ Proof, if proof be need be, that it isn't just shooting guns are good for.



GENTLEMEN OF SOME REPUTE

RASHID AD-DIN SINAN

ASSASSIN'S CREED,
AC: REVELATIONS

Popping up in the original as well as *Revelations*, the Old Man Of The Mountain acted as a mentor to Altair before his desire for the Apple Of Eden caused him to betray the Assassins.



LEONARDO DA VINCI

ASSASSIN'S CREED 2,
AC: BROTHERHOOD

A long-time friend of Ezio, the serial inventor Leo is the main source of the assassin's funky little tools and toys through *Assassin's Creed 2* and its follow up *Brotherhood*. He dies, but isn't assassinated.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

ASSASSIN'S CREED III

A major figure in the American Revolutionary War and *Assassin's Creed III*, Washington is also an associate of Connor and, at some point, holder of the Apple Of Eden. Will it send him mad with power? Probably not.



NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI

ASSASSIN'S CREED 2,
AC: BROTHERHOOD

While the term 'Machiavellian' has negative connotations, Niccolò is actually a firm ally of Ezio and one of the higher ranking assassins in the Order. He doesn't even betray the player or anything like that, which is nice.

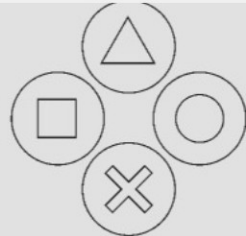
ROBERT DE SABLÉ

ASSASSIN'S CREED

A Templar and a bit of a bugger, truth be told, Robert is bested in combat by Altair and dies – though not before he reveals the secret background of Altair's mentor. Crafty.



ASSASSIN'S CREED III



“Time is our biggest enemy! More power is always welcome, but I’m amazed at how much we crammed into the game and how much is still coming online even now as we rush toward release”

> faith, the hidden blade and the ongoing battle with the Templar threat are of course still in there.”

Though there is plenty of new newness in the game, there’s still so much that can’t be done. We’re still living in the current generation of consoles, and no definite news of the next gen would appear to be, in some cases, holding back technological progress. Or maybe not, according to Hutchinson, as *Assassin’s Creed III* still manages to pull technical feats off even without the aid of faster, newer, better hardware. “The dynamic water is amazing, switching from clear and calm seas to raging storms. It’s the best water I’ve ever seen in a game. The new climbing in trees is amazing, and it was so hard to get it working on such varied shapes. Combat on uneven terrain, which is usually a no-no in games, works in *ACIII* and looks great. And the big crowds of line infantry, thousands of them on screen in a few scenes, is really impressive.” But then, he makes the thing – he would say that, wouldn’t he? But looking over what we’ve seen of the game, it’s not exactly an outlandish claim. *Assassin’s Creed III* is current-gen, but it still looks fantastic.

All the same, Hutchinson was the first to admit it isn’t all easy as the proverbial: “[Making the game is] harder on purely technical features like graphics and effects, as the hardware didn’t change, but it’s easier for gameplay because we can start with some systems and some knowledge in place.” And the biggest problem of all? “Time is our biggest enemy! More power is always welcome, but I’m amazed at how much we crammed into the game and how much is still coming online even now as we rush toward release.” Though one feature we won’t be seeing in *Assassin’s Creed III* is the ability to play as a bear. “You can fight many different predators, all of them unique, but no, sadly you can’t play as a bear...” We ask the tough questions at **Play**, no doubt about it.

All this technical achievement is just a glossy coat without substance to it, so it’s fortunate Hutchinson and the Ubisoft teams know this. Case in point: weather isn’t just a cosmetic touch. “Deep snow slows you and your enemies down.” So? Well, it’ll be “encouraging you to climb, allowing you to track enemies and also making them easier targets for assassination.” Those carpets of white dung aren’t just there to make things look Christmassy – it’s a tangible mechanic that, as logic would have it, can be taken advantage of by the player. And it’s unlikely to be the only feature of its kind in *ACIII*.

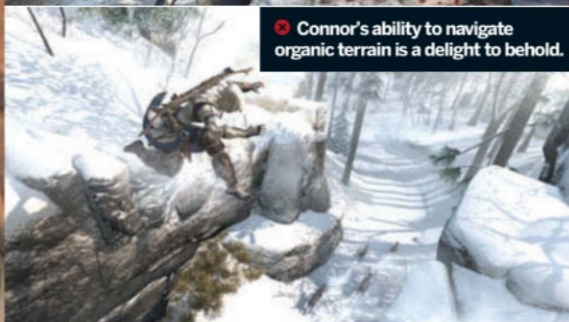
For all the scope, size and ambition of *Assassin’s Creed III*, what we’re left with at the end is a game made by individuals – people like Hutchinson who worry, hope and take risks. “I was always confident that if we could keep the quality high then people would get excited; the core promise of *Assassin’s Creed*, both in its interactions with history and its gameplay pitch, is still very relevant and fresh, so I can’t imagine that changing, so I wasn’t too worried. That said, any large project is always terrifying: it’s three years of my life, and you don’t want to waste that, so you take risks and you work hard and you try to make it all come together in the end.”



✖ This is about as close as we’re going to get to *The Grey: The Game*.



✖ Connor’s ability to navigate organic terrain is a delight to behold.



A LOT OF REAL-LIFE FACES HAD AN IMPACT ON THE CANON OF ASSASSIN’S CREED – HERE’S JUST A FEW



MANUEL PALAIOLOGOS

AC: REVELATIONS

A man of tremendous girth, member of the Templars and heir to the throne of the Byzantine Empire – it’s a decent resumé, no doubt. But then he was taken out incredibly easily by Ezio, so there’s that.



RICHARD I OF ENGLAND

ASSASSIN’S CREED

Not an Assassin, not a Templar, definitely a Lionheart: the absentee king meets Altair and decides to trust the man after he bests the king’s most trusted general in combat. Yes, that makes sense.

CESARE BORGIA

AC: BROTHERHOOD

Eventually ending up Grand Master of the Templars, Cesare is the main antagonist in *Brotherhood* and, for all intents and purposes, is a massive git. Mainly because he killed poor Uncle Mario.





MAKING OF... THE ASSASSIN'S CREED SERIES

PLAY TOOK A TRIP IN ITS VERY OWN ANIMUS IN ORDER TO SPEAK WITH A NUMBER OF FOLKS INVOLVED WITH THE CREATION OF THE ORIGINAL FOUR GAMES, TO GET THEIR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS ON WHAT IT WAS LIKE CREATING A PHENOMENON



● The original game is still as divisive as the day it came out. We weren't hugely impressed.



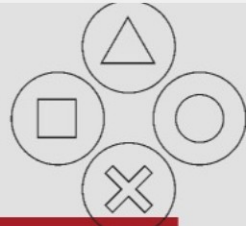
For all the planning and forethought – for all Patrice Desile's creative drive and focus on making the *Assassin's Creed* series as epic, polished and brilliant as it could be – it came down to just a few people going against the

grain to give us some of the more memorable features in the series.

Charles Randall, working as an AI and gameplay programmer on the first game and technical team lead on the second, revealed it was going behind backs that bagged gamers a couple of big features: "Air assassination was cut from *Assassin's Creed*, but I colluded with a few people and snuck it into the game anyway. By the time they noticed I'd done it, well, it didn't make sense to spend time removing a cut feature when it's fully implemented." And it didn't stop there. "In *Assassin's Creed 2*, the same kind of thing happened with hidden blade combat – they decided it would be cut for time concerns, but then they coordinated for the entire team to take their vacations at the same time. I didn't have any vacation time left that year so I stayed behind... and put hidden blade combat in the game."

But there were always plans in place for most elements of the games, including the fact this would always be – at the very least – a trilogy. Charles Beauchemin, engine programmer on the original game, singled out *Assassin's Creed's* central storytelling mechanic – the Animus – as the main reason this was true: "I believe the concept of the 'time travel machine' made it a very good platform to become an exploitable IP. Ubisoft had been looking at new ideas for a long time since their original licences (*Prince of Persia*, *Rayman*, etc) had been quite exploited already."

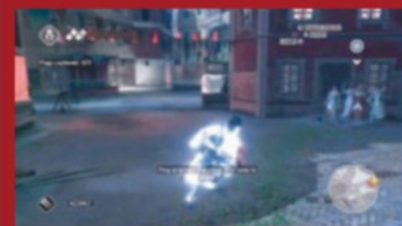
But development is never plain sailing and, with a project as ambitious as *Assassin's Creed*, there were always going to be elements that didn't make it. Philippe Dionne, level designer on *Assassin's Creed*, pointed out one particular mechanic that had to be summarily executed: "One of the craziest parts of the free running feature that didn't see



GOTTA CAPTURE 'EM ALL

CHARLES RANDALL ISN'T
A FLAG MAN, IT SEEMS

"I sat at home and played through *Assassin's Creed 2* in two days and it was amazing. It's the first time I ever liked a game I worked on enough to actually play through to the end. Not only that but it's the only game I've maxed out the gamerscore. Well, mostly. I didn't get the [capture the] flag achievements: those ones were bullshit."



Wait, is that Max Payne?



Ezio's best mate Leonardo Da Vinci made some of his wackier toys.



“ We were looking at having Altaïr doing acrobatic moves on the bodies of the moving crowd like he was doing on the static architecture: running and jumping on shoulders, backs, heads and faces, etc ”

the light of day was 'crowd free running.' We were looking at having Altaïr doing acrobatic moves on the bodies of the moving crowd like he was doing on the static architecture: running and jumping on shoulders, backs, heads and faces, etc. This part of the feature was so time consuming to build that the main character's programmer had to let it go. To be fair, we didn't give him the choice of keeping it..."

Though that's not to say specific changes like this happened a lot – as Randall pointed out it was more a case of overall design changes. "The biggest change was really just the drastic reduction in scope we needed in order to finish the game. The problem with making a game that is completely new is you face a lot of unknown unknowns; and they sap so much of your development time that before you know it, you are shipping a game that people end up calling a 'glorified tech demo.' " Dionne backed this up with the image of a studio fighting for its right to make something it truly believed in: "We were battling beside the directors until the very last moment to prove to Ubisoft's administration that we had something very special in our hands." Though that belief was present everywhere below the upper tiers at the studio, according to Beauchemin: "The management believed in the project and a lot of positive attention was given to the project and the team. People were proud to be working on that project and, in general, everybody from Ubisoft was proud to be part of the studio that was bringing that game to the market." >



KAMIKAZE FEATURES

THE MORE HE TOLD US, THE MORE WE THOUGHT CHARLES RANDALL WAS ACTUALLY A RENEGADE DEVELOPER, SIMPLY DOING AS HE PLEASES

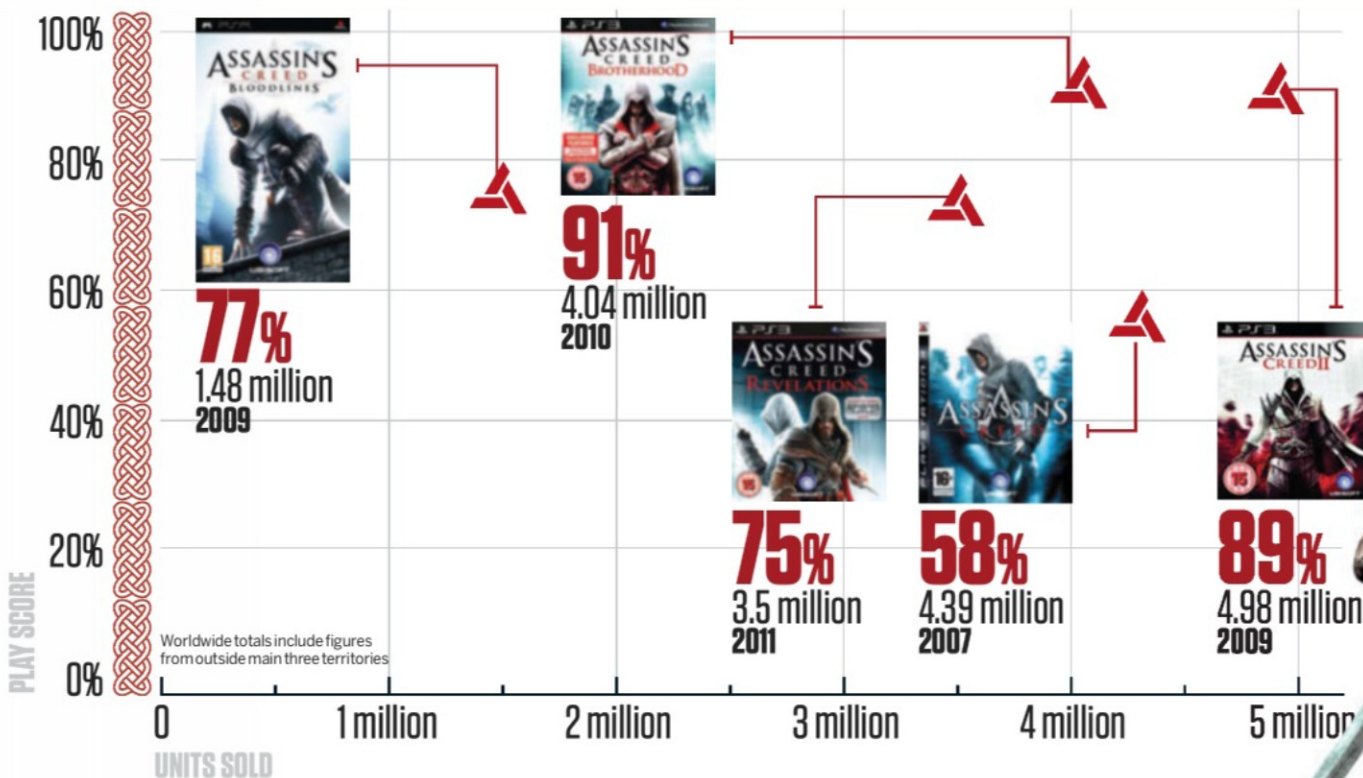
"What most people don't know is that all of the informer gameplay from *Assassin's Creed* was added at the very last moment: myself and a handful of other brave men locked ourselves in a room for five days just before we shipped a gold master, on a kamikaze mission to add those last-minute features. We only had one chance to do it right. It was crazy."

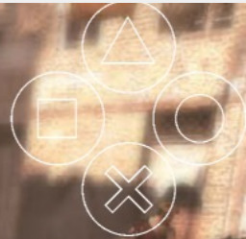
It was *ACII* that first gave us the long-running 'PRESS X FOR SEX' gag. Ah, in-jokes.



KILLER SALES

THE SCORES AND THE SALES FOR THE SERIES INDICATE IT NEEDS AN ASSASSIN'S CREED III-SHAPED KICK UP THE BACKSIDE





PRANK CORNER

UBISOFT IS THOUGHT OF AS A STUDIO SOMEWHAT LACKING IN HUMOUR. NOT SO, ACCORDING TO PHILIPPE DIONNE

"One time, during the weekend, some people came to the office while no one was there. They built a shed around the desk of one of our programmers. They had assembled a life-sized shed with the guy's entire desk, chair and stuff gathered inside. They even added fake grass on the ground and a little white wooden fence around it.

"No need to tell you how much this guy laughed when he saw his 'new desk' on Monday morning. If I remember right, he worked in his shed for few months. He even hacked the building's air conditioner to flow it inside his little house to be more comfortable."



“ We were well aware of the issues that decreased the review scores, we just didn't have time to address those issues in the initial game. There were already plans in place at this time to address these issues in the sequels ”

> The first AC game was met with a mixed reception – critically mauled in some places, hailed as the beginning of a new era in others, it certainly polarised opinion. This wasn't lost on those working on the game: "When the reviews came out, the people who'd been hit the hardest were the game designers and gameplay programmers who wished they could have provided more variety and fun." Beauchemin told us. "However, since the sales numbers were good, the effect was somehow reduced and everybody was already thinking of the next iteration, and how they could bring the game further."

The scores didn't kill the team's enthusiasm though, as Anthony D'Antonio, gameplay integrator on the original release, pointed out: "It was not a morale killer. We were well aware of the issues that decreased the review scores, we just didn't have time to address those issues in the initial game. There were already plans in place at this time to address these issues in the sequels." Then there was the fact the game sold incredibly well, which mitigated any negativity from the gaming press. As Dionne told us, "The sales figures came out and we were able to see that the gamers were enjoying what we had done. We were hoping that the public was happy with what we delivered because that was only the simplest core of a bigger piece that was still to come."

And those bigger and bigger pieces did arrive – first to bigger sales and scores, but soon enough to dwindling numbers on both measures. As D'Antonio told us: "I believe the series was starting to get a little stale, but it seems that will change with *Assassins Creed 3*." And while confidence the series will be reinvigorated by the next title is high, Beauchemin had words of caution: "With Patrice Désilets gone to THQ, Jade Raymond now in Ubisoft Toronto, and many others important leads

gone to other companies, the original pillars are now somewhat gone." And this cautious attitude was clearly shared by Randall, who said: "I think it's unfortunate that Ubisoft decided to move AC to the now-industry standard yearly release cycle. I feel it cheapens any property... But I do love the choice of settings. I look forward to seeing where else they decide to set the games moving forward."

Regardless of how people might feel about the series and its current direction, there's one thing everyone we spoke to agreed on: they are proud to be a part of the history of *Assassin's Creed*. Beauchemin remained modest, but didn't hide his pride: "I am very proud to have been part of the AC legacy. Even if my contribution is very small, I am happy that I was there when it happened." While D'Antonio simply said: "I feel extremely fortunate that I was able to be a part of the creation of one of the industry's most ground breaking titles." Meanwhile, Randall wasn't afraid to let us know what he really thinks: "With apologies to my friends on other projects at Ubi, but I think AC remains Ubi's absolute best IP. Few triple-A games are so inventive and imaginative, and the AC core team, despite its losses over the years, remains one of the best in the industry."

But the last word has to be left for Dionne, because it almost brings a tear to the eye: "Honestly, when I'm looking at everything that has been done until now I cannot stop myself thinking, in a little corner of my heart, that I'm missing them. I'm missing the team, the ambiance. And I'm very lucky and mostly proud of being able to say that I was part of the core team that put this awesome game together. Ubisoft has achieved, like I said before, one of the best games that will ever be made in my humble opinion. A name that won't be forgotten soon."

PS3

THE 25 PLAYSTATION 3 ESSENTIALS

WANT TO CONVERT YOUR PS3 INTO THE
ULTIMATE GAMING CENTRE? THESE
ARE THE BITS OF KIT YOU NEED



LG 42LS5600 42-INCH LED TV

■ Obviously you need a television to play games, but we're in the era now where you really should have a high definition set – so long as you can afford one. Nearly £500 is a fair wodge of cash, but LG is a proven manufacturer of quality televisions and for the price it's sure to last you a number of years. And to be honest, who can put a price on making your games look *really* nice? Who indeed.

£479.99



ASTRO Gaming A40 Audio System

■ There are good headsets, then there are *really* good headsets. The Astro A40 falls firmly into the latter category, offering some absolutely brilliant quality audio. It costs a fair whack, mind you, though you can get the headset alone for cheaper – this price is for the set and mixamp, which allows you to use the built-in microphone with your console. It's not an impulse purchase, but if you have the cash the Astro A40 is one of the best bets for headsets. Which rhymes.

£199.99



DualShock 3

■ There comes a time in everyone's life when they have to entertain others in their house, but this modern convenience of online play has killed many notions of owning multiple pads in order to play against your friends. So sidestep that particular pitfall by picking up a DualShock 3, ready to be put to use for when your mates come round and trounce you at *FIFA* again. And even if you don't have any friends, it never hurts to have a spare.

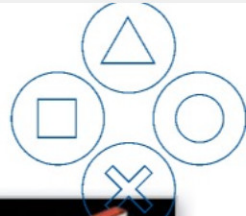
£39.99

WESTERN DIGITAL SCORPIO BLUE 2.5 INCH 1TB HDD



■ It's not difficult to fit a new hard drive in the PS3 – slim or fat – as Sony built the machine with the ability to switch out drives in mind. As such, we often wonder aloud why more people don't take advantage of the feature. Simply buy a lower-capacity PS3 on the cheap and pick up one of these WD badboys to install. Then, all of a sudden you have a one terabyte monster waiting to store every single game, movie, song and photo in the world on it.

£79.95



THRUSTMASTER FERRARI GT EXPERIENCE RACING WHEEL

■ There's a certain genre of games that tries for a level of authenticity you can't get in other areas. And there's a whole range of peripherals that cater for those who want to enjoy a more immersive experience. Basically, if you want *Gran Turismo 5* to feel even more like a racing simulator, you might want to look into getting the Thrustmaster – it's basic but gets the job done. Or you can pick up the far superior, far more expensive Logitech Driving Force GT for about £130.

£29.99



PS Eye

■ You might not want Move, but there are still a few reasons to pick up a PlayStation Eye camera – mainly unrelated to actual gaming. Of course, you can put your face in some games like *Burnout Paradise*, or add your visage to characters in some EA Sports games, but it's the other functions like video chat that make it a mite more interesting. Oh, and you can use it as a traditional, microphone-sporting webcam on your computer if you like.

£14.99

SANDISK CRUZER SLICE 32GB USB FLASH DRIVE

■ Transferring data between your computer and PS3 (or, to an increasingly lesser extent, your PSP) can be a bit of a roundabout process, but there are ways to simplify things. Pick up a 32GB SanDisk Cruiser Slice for a matter of a lot less than its initial £90 RRP and you instantly have the ability to transfer files to and from your console, including some (non-encrypted) PS3 save files and PSone saves from console to handheld. Ideal if you want to keep your progress on *Final Fantasy VI* going on the bus.

£13.99



WATERFIELD PS VITA CASE

■ The PS Vita is portable, of course, but we always feel it needs a bit more protection what with its massive screen and the ability to lose its tiny cartridges in the hidden pockets of your bag. As such, it's recommended that you pick up Waterfield's PS Vita case – perfect to hold the console itself and a few games too, meaning you're far less likely to lose your copy of *Rayman Origins* through a hole in your pocket before it falls down a nearby drain.

£35.00



2m Gold-Plated HDMI cable

■ For some reason Sony still doesn't want to bundle the PS3 console with an HDMI lead, even though it's fast becoming the standard for all manner of connections. If you have an HDTV from the last five years, it'll have at least one HDMI port. HDMI offers the best consumer standard video and audio signal, so you'll want to use it over other connectors. And so you'll want to buy a HDMI lead – and you don't have to spend more than a fiver on one.

£3.65



LOGITECH X-530 HOME THEATRE 5.1 SPEAKER SYSTEM

■ Your TV speakers function and your headphones do a service, but you should look at picking up a sound system to really *do the job*. Surround sound on a subwoofing mega-system of watts and speakers and other things we don't really understand all combine together to make for an aural experience that adds just as much to the experience as getting a really good TV does. The Logitech X-530 ticks all those boxes, and comes in at an affordable price too.

£46.99



Giotek Real Triggers

■ We're the first to admit that the triggers on the DualShock 3 aren't all that great. They're slippy and don't do much to help keep your fingers actually on them, least of all when you're pressing them as hard as you can. But with a purchase of a few pounds it is possible to attach a couple of little plastic bits to the pad in the shape of the Giotek Real Triggers, thus turning the L2 and R2 buttons into actual, functioning triggers.

£1.49



Optoma HD230X home cinema projector

■ This isn't an either-or choice between projectors and TVs – we know many a person who has both: telly for day to day operations, projector for Sunday best. What better way to really make gaming a big part of a get-together than to make it absolutely dominate the room? The Optoma HD230X isn't cheap, at all, but it does offer full HD projections that you can blast on your wall at up to 300 inches diagonally. That's effectively a 300-inch TV.

£579.99



KONNET POWER PYRAMID COMBO CONTROLLER CHARGER

■ With multiple pads comes the need to charge them, and with only a couple of USB ports on newer PS3s comes the difficulty of keeping everything plugged in at once. As such, a separate charging station for your pads can be a gift from Thor himself. The Konnet Pyramid makes for quicker charging, as it isn't using the USB 'trickle charge' method, and it means you can have a constant rotation of charged pads on the go. It also works on pads for the other

£20.00



CLIMAXDIGITAL PS2 TO PS3 MEMORY CARD ADAPTOR

■ "All those moments will be lost in time... like tears in rain." So went Roy Barry's famous ode to PS3's backwards compatibility and the saves he lost. No more! This device is only needed where PS2 games can be played – those bought from PSN or anything played through 'fat' PS3 consoles – but your saves can be kept. Our Emile Heskey strike from *Pro Evo 2* when he fell on the ball and it rolled into the net lives on.

£4.94



SACKBOY 3" FIGURINE

■ Nothing quite says "I'm ready for the responsibilities of adult life" like having a small toy – or several – adorning your HDTV. Which is why Ian has a Mini Ninja by his work monitor. And Ryan has Eric Bischoff in a karate outfit by his TV. The most responsible adults in the land, writing this very magazine.

£2.99



PS MOVE

■ It's the forgotten child of the PS3, but there's enough available for PS Move to justify picking up one of the wagglegsticks. Why? Well, because they've been reduced in most shops and so can be had for a pittance. For that pittance you get a few decent games – *Sports Champions*, *Sorcery*, *Dead Space: Extraction* – and the chance to partake in the control curio that is first-person shooters with motion control. Oooh, they're the Marmite of the controls world.

£24.99



VERTICAL STAND & GAME STORAGE

■ This is the cheapest of cheap peripherals, a vertical stand that also stores your games. It might be useful if you have your PlayStation 3 stood up in the middle of your living room and you have children who run around, energetic pets or a robot that exists solely to knock consoles over. Then this is definitely the best thing you will ever buy for £9.99. Surprised you haven't done it already, to be honest.

£9.99



HORI FIGHTING STICK V3

■ Fighting game enthusiasts swear by sticks like the V3, while some still claim pads are better. Thing is, the latter group is demonstrably wrong – joysticks shouldn't just be a purist's pursuit, they should be something everyone interested in brawlers has access to. You can spend over a hundred quid on a stick, but for less than £50 you can grab the excellent Hori stick – sturdy, the right size and responsive. All you need, really.

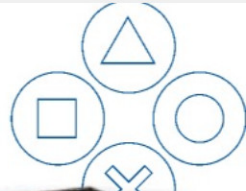
£44.99



WHITE PS3

■ You can get something a little different to the usual PS3 without needing to go down the route of third-party mods that awkwardly clamp onto your console like a drunken lech. Sony released a line of white PS3 consoles and they're still fairly easy to find and cheap to buy, setting you back around the same price as a normal console. Best of all, they look gorgeous on account of looking different and unusual.

£208.00



GENIUS X SCROLL PS/2 MOUSE

■ It will make you coffee, it will listen to you cry when you're upset and when you're thinking of ordering pizza when *WWE* is on, it'll already have the pizza ready for you. Ha! Do you see? It's a joke about how a mouse can't really do anything except scroll about a bit. It does make *Unreal Tournament 3* and (more importantly) *The Orange Box* immeasurably better though, so grabbing a cheap mouse for those games is worth it.

£9.99



LOGITECH K120 KEYBOARD

■ By the time we type 'HEY BABY DO U COME HERE OFTEN LOL' in *DC Universe Online*, FighterGirl64 has already flown off, our heartfelt words of romance drifting aimlessly away in her trail like empty crisp packets in a breeze. The keyboard solves that problem but makes messaging in general easier, as typing long messages on the PS3 using just the pad gives us finger cramp that forces our hands into lobster shapes.

£6.00



AVERMEDIA GAME CAPTURE HD C281

■ For those who ask about how we take screenshots and videos, we have a magic box of tricks that cost approximately eight billion pounds, has no name and occasionally refuses to work because it detects our peasant-like aroma. And we also have this. It's the budget option and comes with a few compromises – it doesn't have 'true' HD (no HDMI), has a few frames of lag and you need to buy memory for it. But it's budget, it works, it's good.

£119.00



X ROCKER VISION 2.1

■ The problem with gaming on a sofa is you slowly become more and more horizontal before falling into a pizza-induced coma while everyone else on your *Call Of Duty* team starts swiping knives at your face and shouting angry words at you. X-Rocker Vision, with its sounds of explosions, fire and death behind you as though you're recovering from a particularly potent vindaloo, ensures this isn't a problem.

£159.95



PSP GO

■ You can buy them for mega-cheap second hand if the PS Vita price is still scaring you off. Why should you? It's basically a cheap and portable *Final Fantasy* console, with the loading being almost instant. We actually got one just to play *Final Fantasy IX* on the move, but then we do need to have a good, long think about our life priorities (1. Get food 2. Play *Final Fantasy IX* 3. Talk to people 4. Something about washing ourselves)

£68.99



STREET FIGHTER VS TEKKEN FIGHT PAD

■ If you want the proper six-button layout of *Street Fighter* but find you work arcade sticks with all the tact and care of a crane operator, this is the compromise. It's a pad with the official six-button layout and Steve Fox's face peeping out from under the buttons. We're not sure why. Maybe it's so when you lose a round and you hand your head in shame, you make eye contact with Steve's motivational face and feel pumped up again. Possibly.

£23.99

TOTAL PRICE £2229.83

WHAT'S
NEXT
FOR

BATMAN

WHAT DO YOU DO NEXT IF YOU'VE MADE TWO OF THE BEST GAMES THIS GENERATION? RIP UP THE RULEBOOK AND START AGAIN. PLAY SPOKE TO **ROCKSTEADY** INSIDER GAME DIRECTOR SEFTON HILL ABOUT THE MAKING OF THE **ARKHAM** TITLES AND LOOK AT WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE CAPED CRUSADER

BATMAN IS MORE THAN BRAWLS AND BRAWN. IF ROCKSTEADY RETURNS TO THE SILVER AGE OF COMICS FOR A PREQUEL, WE COULD SEE HIS DETECTIVE SIDE RETURN.



Millions of copies sold. A combined Metacritic rating of 185%. Multiple Game Of The Year awards. It doesn't take the world's greatest detective to work out Rocksteady's *Batman* games have been an outstanding success. Not bad for a company whose only other game is PS2 actioner *Urban Chaos: Riot Response*.

So you'd think that Rocksteady and Warner would be happy pumping out progressively bigger *Arkham* games until the year 3000. (*Arkham World* had been teased, albeit never seriously.) The studio has the tech, ability and creative talent to transpose the current vogue for moody, dark *Batman* into good videogames, no mean feat considering *Batman* games had generally been as well received as a Robin action figure for Christmas. Rocksteady absolutely nailed the violent, pragmatic *Batman* vibe that Christopher Nolan's movies helped popularise. The games were more outlandish, sure (killer sharks, anyone?), but the two experiences certainly shared enough DNA to be beneficial to one another. So why the rumours that this will all be ditched to return to the hyper-colourful Silver Age of comics?

HOLLYWOOD SWINGIN'

Once again, it could all be down to the influence of Hollywood. Part of the reason for *Arkham Asylum*'s popularity was due to the Christopher Nolan movies creating a huge surge in popularity for the adventures of everyone's favourite PTSD sufferer. Then, when the official tie-in game for *The Dark Knight* got the chop,

Rocksteady had a clear run at creating a *Batman* game to capitalise on this popularity.

"The other *Batman* game (*The Dark Knight*) by Pandemic got cancelled," Yannis Ziakas, who worked on the *Arkham* games as a promotional artist, told us. "That meant that right after the movie, our game was the first *Batman* game out, and we were hoping that would put a bigger spotlight on the pristine game we were making."

It certainly did, and both film and game did very well for each other. With Nolan's movie series finished, however, the game (in all senses) has changed. It will come as no surprise to anyone that the celluloid version of the franchise will be rebooted, giving us a different take on *Batman*. If US movie/entertainment trade mag *Variety* is correct, the same is rumoured to be true of the games as well. And said different take is very different indeed, which is where things get interesting for Rocksteady.

Variety's website reports that "Until Warner Bros. assembles its creative team around a 'Justice League' movie, the studio and DC Entertainment are focusing on getting audiences used to seeing the group's superheroes together in other ways."

One of those ways is by making Rocksteady's next *Batman* game a "new, highly stylized title [that] is being developed as a prequel that revolves around Batman's first meeting with the Joker." According to the report "It's based on the Silver Age of DC's comic books from the Fifties when the Caped Crusader teamed with heroes like Superman and founded the Justice League of America." >

5-A-SIDE JUSTICE LEAGUE

CAN ROCKSTEADY FINALLY GET MAKE MULTIPLAYER TO WORK?

We've all been there: swooping through the streets of Gotham, cracking skulls and solving puzzles, thinking: this would be amazing if there was someone else by my side. No, Robin, not you.

Well, if Rocksteady wants to drop multiplayer into *Batman*, then now is the time. With the entire Justice League at its disposal (if indeed it chooses to use the Silver Age setting) there's plenty of scope for asymmetrical gameplay: Superman flying overhead while Batman stalks the shadows below, The Flash sprinting through the streets, Wonder Woman, er, flying in her invisible thing. At first glance there are design problems associated with this: how do you make an (open) game world that can accommodate these various superheroes?

Upon further consideration, however, we're certain it could be done. *Uncharted 3* has successfully retuned its gameplay for multiplayer purposes and a similar system could work for *Batman*, with the gadgets replacing the guns. Likewise *Mass Effect 3* and its us-versus-them waves of goons.

No matter what happens, it certainly wouldn't be the first time someone connected with the franchise had considered a multiplayer mode, or the difficulty in making it work.

"I would somehow try and get the game to have a multiplayer experience and perhaps replayability like 1vs1 freeflow combat, but that would be a huge job," was promotional artist Yannis Ziakas' answer when we asked about multiplayer. "Rocksteady was focusing on completing the original goals perfectly rather than overextending."

CASE STUDY 1: UNCHARTED 3



CASE STUDY 2: MASS EFFECT 3



> A quick look at the cast-lists and art styles would appear to mark Rocksteady's next as a less serious adventure. Looking back at the making of the last two games however, that's not to say that Rocksteady will be taking it any less seriously, in both design and direction. In fact, the team may already have been working on it for some time.

"It was three months before *Arkham Asylum's* release that the story and concept for *Arkham City* was starting, as far as I know, but I am sure preparations were made slightly earlier," Ziakas stated, giving us an insight into Rocksteady's working practices. "Four to five people were pulled to start work on it. I am not positive but work probably started really close to the end of *Asylum* rather than earlier."

NEW AGE OF HEROES

Given that Rocksteady turned around *Arkham City* just two years after *Asylum*, rumours that the studio has been prepping early for a sequel wouldn't be a surprise. For those whose experience of *Batman* only extends to Nolan or Burton's creations, the Silver Age and (if they're in it) the Justice League will be a shock. Superman, Wonder Woman and Martian Manhunter all feature, and the day-glo colours and Sixties styling are out of step with what Rocksteady has created so far.

"BATMAN'S BULGE WAS CONSIDERED OUTRAGEOUS BY DC/WB IN SOME EARLY ITERATIONS. HE ALSO WENT THROUGH SOME DESIGN PHASES WHERE HE WAS TOO SLIM OR TOO HUGE, MUSCLE-WISE. IT GOT ITERATED UNTIL IT WAS PERFECT"

**PROMOTIONAL ARTIST
YANNIS ZIAKAS**

THE DARK STYLE. WILL IT BECOME A THING OF THE PAST?

RUMOURS SAY ROCKSTEADY WILL VISIT THE LIGHTER, BRIGHTER TONE OF THE SILVER AGE OF COMICS FOR A BATMAN PREQUEL.

Sefton Hill, game director on both *Arkham* titles, explained the process of how Rocksteady adapted characters for *Arkham Asylum* and *City*: "We select the characters that best tell the story and challenge Batman in interesting ways, both thematically and in terms of gameplay. When recreating these much loved characters in the Arkhamverse, we do have to make sure the world retains its coherency. This often involves subtly adapting and reimagining the characters to remove anything that would not feel right in our world, while still retaining their defining character traits to make them instantly recognisable. Some of the more fantastical characters require a greater detail of tweaking to keep the universe coherent and believable, but there are limits. Solomon Grundy was perhaps the character we discussed most in terms of how far we wanted to push the fantastical element without compromising the believability and coherency."

So there will be a lot of care behind the treatment of the characters should the Silver Age rumours come true and, like both *Arkham* games, Rocksteady won't be the only one working to create the correct look and feel for *Batman*. DC and Warner will have approval as well, as they did on the previous two titles.

"[DC had] concept process approval and general art style and story approvals in combination with WB. Every character concept was sent over for approval and iterations," Ziakas told us. "Batman's bulge was considered outrageous by DC/WB in some early iterations. He also went through some design phases where he was too slim or too huge, muscle-wise. It got iterated until it was perfect. Same for other characters. Joker's hair received a few changes and improvements that changed the look of it, but it was mainly a technical remake than a style change. It did make a huge visual impact."

'Visual impact' is the key phrase here. Rocksteady's design work is extremely impressive, on both large and small scales. From the size of *Arkham City* >

NEW KIDS IN TOWN

PLAY weighs up which Silver Age heroes and villains will make the cut

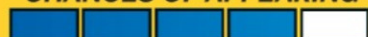
HEROES



GREEN LANTERN

Most known these days from being played by Ryan Reynolds in a terrible movie, test pilot Hal Jordan is part of the intergalactic Green Lantern Corps and the proud owner of a special 'power ring' that can create anything he pleases. (Apart from a good movie.) Cocky though he can be, he'd probably make a pleasingly irritating ally for Batman.

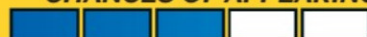
CHANCES OF APPEARING



SUPERMAN

The All-American icon has starred in some of the worst games of all time. He's near-invincible, super fast, super strong... which is part of the problem. How do you make him a vulnerable character that doesn't feel like god mode? Although he's an integral part of the Justice League, we're not sure if Rocksteady want, or even can, implement him in their world.

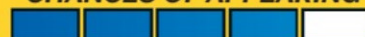
CHANCES OF APPEARING



WONDER WOMAN

Probably best known for the Seventies TV series, and later for the *Family Guy* skits about her (clearly visible) invisible plane, Wonder Woman shares many of the same qualities as Superman. Given how Rocksteady likes to include powerful female characters, and that she's not appeared in too many games to date, we can see this happening.

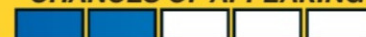
CHANCES OF APPEARING



THE FLASH

One of the most under-utilised DC characters when it comes to gaming (*DC Universe Online* and *Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe* notwithstanding), The Flash's superpower isn't really conducive to games. Unless, of course, the game in question is *International Track & Field*. Which it isn't. Could be a background character.

CHANCES OF APPEARING



THE ARTWORK HERE IS TAKEN FROM THE VASTLY UNDER-RATED AND NOW FREE TO PLAY DC UNIVERSE ONLINE.



THE JOKER

Well, he couldn't not be in it, could he? We're excited to see exactly what Rocksteady does with the first meeting between Batman and the Clown Prince Of Crime, should the studio run with it. Granted, The Joker probably won't be going around shooting people, but that doesn't mean he won't be as dangerous to Batman as before.

CHANCES OF APPEARING



THE SCARECROW

What's interesting is how The Scarecrow has remained a largely peripheral character in the mainstream *Batman* universe – Nolan using the character for cameos after *Batman Begins* while Rocksteady didn't bring him back for *Arkham City*. His fear gimmick makes for unusual play mechanics, so we reckon an appearance is likely.

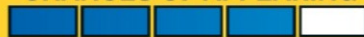
CHANCES OF APPEARING



CATWOMAN

After becoming a playable character in the last game we wouldn't bet against Catwoman appearing here either. Although, again, we're not sure if all of the rampant sexualisation and murder/death/killing of the past game will make it in. She'll definitely still be more than a match for Batman and again, could offer a stealthy alternative to Batman's brutal style.

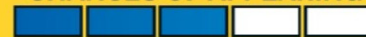
CHANCES OF APPEARING



POISON IVY

She made her *Batman* debut in 1966, coming in at the tail end of the Silver Age, and she's a character that works just as well in a camp setting (see the *Batman & Robin* movie) as a gritty, serious environment. She's one of the few *Batman* villains to have superpowers and an earlier, lighter tone to a *Batman* prequel could let Rocksteady run wild with the idea.

CHANCES OF APPEARING

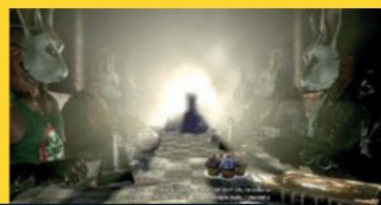


VILLAINS



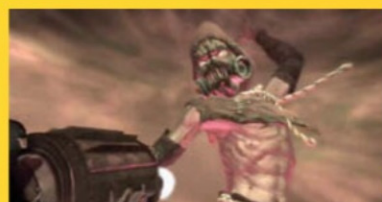
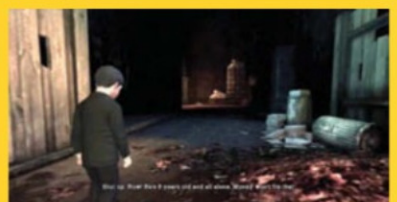
ARKHAM'S BEST MOMENTS

RUNNING DOWN ROCKSTEADY'S FINEST CREATIONS



MAD HATTER KIDNAPPING ARKHAM CITY

Flying high above Arkham, Batman receives a call from Alfred. Explaining that he knows where the Dark Knight can find a cure for the poison slowly killing him, the player decides whether to take up the offer. It looks like a trap... and it is a trap, as The Mad Hatter then drugs you. Great because it dials into the exploration aspect, and for showing that said curiosity can also get the Bat.



SCARECROW BOSS FIGHT ARKHAM ASYLUM

Rocksteady's boss fights aren't always the greatest, but the first encounter with Scarecrow is a brilliant moment. Having been exposed to the Fear Toxin, Bats has to hide from the gaze of a suddenly fifty-foot tall Scarecrow. Ostensibly a stealth section, it's made far more engaging by the tables being turned on Batman, who's powerless against both his foe and his own imagination.



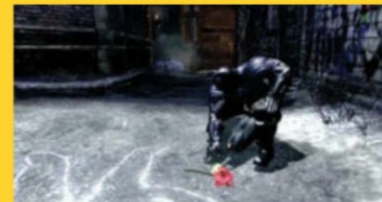
THE RIDDLER CHALLENGES BOTH GAMES

Both a constant thorn in Batman's side and an inspired use of the licence, the Riddler challenges are one of Arkham's best features. Passive quests that are well worth breaking off the main track for, these multi-part brainteasers highlight the best elements of Rocksteady's open-world design.



BRUCE WAYNE KICKS ASS ARKHAM CITY

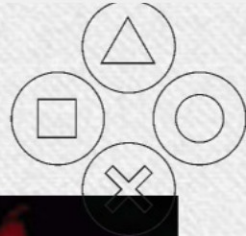
Thrown into jail at the beginning of Arkham City, the Prince Of Gotham is an easy target for the inmates. Or so they think. Wayne, resplendent in tailored suit and bound in handcuffs, instructs a fellow prisoner to stay behind him if he wants to stay safe. Said prisoner does one, wondering how some playboy toff is going to save him. We all know how. Ultraviolence. *That's* how.



SOFTER SIDE OF BATMAN BOTH GAMES

Christopher Nolan captured the steely realism of Batman's armoury, but the games capture the real essence of Bruce Wayne. Haunted by his parent's death, Bats' grief is often exposed: being turned into a child by the Scarecrow, seeing a vision of his dead parents before the fight with Ra's Al-Ghul, and when players find Crime Alley. Stand there for a while. You won't be disappointed.





CATWOMAN PLAYED ON HER SEX APPEAL IN *ARKHAM CITY* BUT A POTENTIAL RETURN TO THE SILVER AGE WILL SEE A LIGHTER TONE TAKEN WITH THE CHARACTER.



to the small tears that slowly appear on Batman's suit as the games progress, the team's attention to detail is well-regarded for a reason. Any potential Silver Age prequel would have even more elements to work with; the hyper-colourful art style is the most obvious new addition, but should Rocksteady opt to include some of the more overtly 'comic book' touches – onomatopoeic collision bubbles for when Bats smashes someone in the face spring to mind – we're going to be in for something, tonally at least, a little different from the last few games.

"We have a very iterative approach to design, with features adapting and changing each month until we are perfectly happy with them," explains Hill, talking about the previous Arkham titles and how Rocksteady tackled them. "So inevitably there are features that don't work first, second or even third time around, depending on how bad my original ideas are! Eventually these will morph into something we like, with the end result often quite different from where we started. There are occasions when we'll drop an idea altogether but they are quite rare."

So what ideas were dropped from the *Arkham* games? Shark repellent on the Batbelt? Robin available as a sidekick? "To be honest I have a terrible memory so I'm sure there are a lot of examples," concedes Hill. "We did have a move where you could kick off walls during combat, which looked cool, but always ended up with the player looking at the wall, so played like crap!"

"I WOULD SOMEHOW TRY AND GET THE GAME TO HAVE A MULTIPLAYER EXPERIENCE AND PERHAPS REPLAYABILITY LIKE ONE VERSUS ONE FREEFLOW COMBAT, BUT THAT WOULD BE A HUGE JOB"
ZIAKAS, ON HOW HE'D LIKE TO SEE MULTIPLAYER INCORPORATED INTO THE SERIES

THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS

By far Rocksteady's greatest achievement, outside of the world it created, was the Freeflow combat system. Ziakas describes it as "something that we knew was going to change the whole game" and it's tough to imagine Arkham without it. In fact, it's tough to see Batman going from skull-shattering vigilante to a more campy crime-fighter as the rumours suggest, but Rocksteady has proved it's adaptable enough for the job.

This is by no means definitely happening, of course: there's probably as much chance of Batman exploring a yet-larger, Arkhamised area of Gotham as there is in spraying shark-repellent and hanging out with Wonder Woman. We wouldn't be surprised if that did happen however. And if it did, what *would* be a surprise would be if Rocksteady focused on different area of the age – Batman meeting Joker for the first time – and had the rest of the Justice League as a support team or in the background, toning down the campier

elements to create a smooth transition between titles. With the success of *Lego Batman 2*, the precedent for an enjoyable Silver Age title is there, and by combining DC and Warner's backing with its own ferocious work ethic, the British studio will deliver another cracker no matter which route it takes.

"Very work-focused, but relaxed," Ziakas says when he's asked about how Rocksteady creates its games. "There were little to no breaks during work, even smoking breaks were considered a waste of time but there were free drinks and very powerful machines, etc."

"You could get, through IT, anything you wanted for your comfort, like chairs, wrist pads, mousepads, new equipment or software... really fast. However there was little to no time spent in the kitchen and rec room, etc. It was the right way to go about it when the company was going make or break with a game. It was efficient. Extremely high efficiency in that studio. Nobody was unhappy or felt mistreated."

We're willing to bet that, when Rocksteady's next *Batman* game hits shelves, that last line will ring true for players as well. ☹️



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PREVIEWS

The games that will shape the future of PlayStation



RELEASE DATE: 28 SEPTEMBER

✳ The scourge of Manchester United is better than ever. Be afraid.

FIFA 13

Insert football pun here

PS3 Far from being the best football game of all time, last year's *FIFA 12* was merely a good *FIFA* game. Put the pitchforks down; you know it to be true. Good as it was, it was also too slow, too fiddly, with too few worthy improvements to be considered in the same class as the mighty *FIFA 10*. Last year's game focused heavily on the defensive end of things, resulting in Tactical Defending, which got turned off in a heartbeat. This year it's the attacking game that has been worked on, and the result is a series of improvements that change the way the game plays as a whole, and are far more important than last year's defensive bolt-ons.

First up is new attacking AI, which starts player runs two steps ahead. So instead of your forward only running when you've got the ball behind him, now midfielders will start to make runs

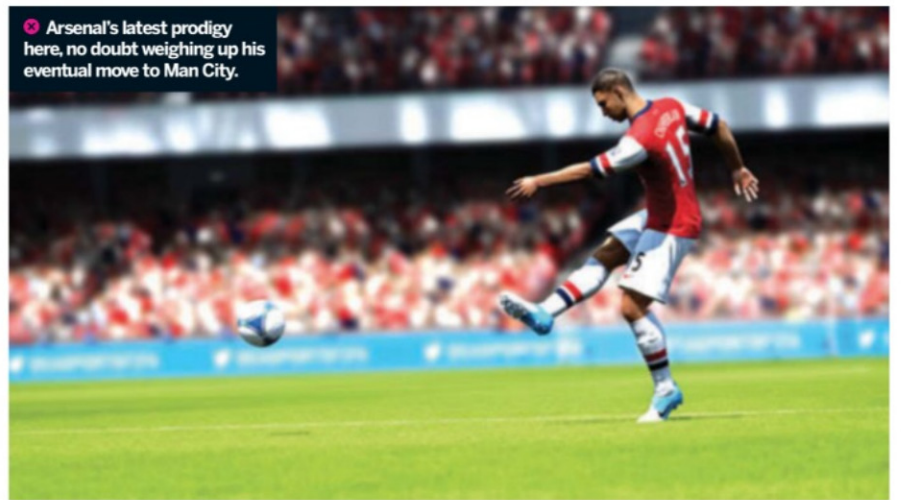
behind defenders as well, even curving their movement if need be. It leads to some intricate, Barca-esque play, and more ways to open up defences: through balls are lethal now.

"Attacking AI has totally changed the flow of the game, the way players get open and the way that they work for you," Aaron McHardy, lead gameplay director, told us. "There's so much more intelligence on the players on your team, working harder and working smarter to [make space] on the pitch. I think that creates a lot more diversity and a lot more ways to create goals.

"[The] 'classic *FIFA* goal' was a common way to score, but I feel in this year's game that there are myriad ways of getting your chances and in positions, and you just see much more variety in the way people score."

Augmenting the new AI is the new First Touch mechanic. No longer are

✳ Arsenal's latest prodigy here, no doubt weighing up his eventual move to Man City.



your players the robots they once were, sweeping even the most difficult passes up with ease; now you'll get different results from different passes, emphasising more tactical play. Want to get the ball down and ping it around? Okay if you've got a four-star team; less so for Barnet or Luton players.

"Ball control means a whole lot more [this time around] and you get differentiation [between players]," McHardy continues. "You get your Lionel Messis with impeccable touch.

They're going to take the ball down better than your Shrewsbury players; they're not going to be able to cope with those difficult situations like the Barcelona players."

If that all sounds a bit too involved, too realistic – and there is such a thing – then relax. In play, your first touch is still controlled the same as before, only this time you've got more options and more random outcomes, both good and bad. Got a good player? Use the separation of ball and man to flick it around a defender. Coupled with new animations, it adds a pleasing sense of authenticity, and taking a great first touch and beating a man is as satisfying as *FIFA* has been in years.

In fact, the whole science of going round players has been overhauled.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ❑ First Touch mechanic changes play
- ❑ Crossing is better than before
- ❑ Attacking AI makes for more dynamic attacking play
- ❑ You can still turn Tactical Defending off

READ ME

FIFA 13 will feature Skill Games, each with specific rules, to help you get better at the game.



MR INTERNATIONAL

Are you the next Hodgson?
Or McClaren?

IF THE PINNACLE of your footballing dreams is to one day manage your nation, *FIFA 13* has got you covered. Perform well enough in career and you'll receive offers to manage various international teams. Not that your own team will come calling straight away: smaller nations might be more inclined to take a punt on a less experienced manager, but if you take that role you might not get the one you really want when it becomes available. EA reckons fans have been clamouring for this for years. Finally they're going to get their chance to steer England to glory. Or the quarter-finals. Let's not be silly.

Previous *FIFA* games made it nearly impossible to get cleanly round a man without the use of the right stick. Things have changed here.

"The whole idea about complete dribbling is that we had precision dribbling, we had skill dribble, regular dribble, all these kinds of dribble," McHardy explains. "We wanted to get them to happen on context, on the left stick, so it actually removes some of that problem [of over-complexity] and adding more substance."

Now, it's possible to ghost around players much like it is in *PES*: by using your momentum and direction to either burst past or cut past. It's a big change, because it opens up the attacking game.

Put all these changes together and the game feels different, freed from

some of the niggles that plagued the last few entries. It's not quite there – recurring animations, particularly ages-old goalkeeping ones, spoil well-worked goals, and shooting as a whole still isn't where it should be because shooting across the keeper is still too hard – but it's far better than before.

Big improvements are also promised off the pitch. Although we couldn't test them, if these changes work as they should then the fun-if-broken career mode will finally take the step up it needed to three years ago.

The first and most obvious improvement is that the transfers have been worked on, resulting in no more gobsmacking moves like Messi to Stoke that were annoyingly common in previous games. There's also a

commitment to making negotiations feel like... negotiations: promises can be made to potential recruits when tying up deals, a player's market value rises and falls alongside his current form, and players can now be offered along with cash when trying to strike a deal.

While *FIFA 12* didn't innovate enough and, where it did, did so poorly, *FIFA 13* looks to change the way we play *FIFA*, both on and off the pitch. We're not going to get too excited just yet, given EA's history of changing excellent preview code for the worse upon release, but if it stays like this it'll be by far the best *FIFA* yet. >

FIFA 13 is being developed by EA Canada. Follow its progress online at ea.com/locations/vancouver

PREVIEW

TIME POINTS 125 ATTEMPTS



SKILLS TO PAY THE BILLS

Want to get better? Good

THE NEWLY ADDED Skill Games are reminiscent of the old PES training challenges, and just as much fun to play. Whether it's kicking a ball into a bin or smashing long crosses onto targets, these games are fun distractions during loading screens that also make you better at the game.



THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS WE DIDN'T WANT TO BRING IN ANYTHING NEW UNTIL IT WAS SOLID



NICK CHANNON

FIFA line producer,
EA Canada

Because it's awesome, **Play** flew out to EA Canada's home in Vancouver to talk to FIFA line producer Nick Channon

> If there were one key thing that is different from FIFA 12, what is it?

I think there are two, but if you want one then I think the biggest change we've made is First Touch Control. I think that the Attacking Intelligence is a very, very close second. I think First Touch Control is something that completely changes our game, and what it does in my mind is disconnect the ball from the foot, which is very natural and very realistic, and we've done it in a way that is still fun to play.

As a result, what we're seeing is a game that's much more balanced, and a game that's much more realistic. As a defender when you play, you're looking at the ball and getting an opportunity to time your tackles better. Also what I'm really happy with this year is the way the different elements have come together.

What would you say is the key feature in the updated career mode?

I think career mode has been a bit of a journey. We did a big rewrite back in *FIFA 11*, and we talked at that point that it was a three-year plan and we're at that point now. I think we put all the [groundwork] in place in *11* and last year we spent our time refining it and making sure that it is all right. The most important thing is that we didn't want to bring anything new in until it was solid. And I think last year we made huge strides: we brought in the storylines to give it more personality, and then we spent a lot of time last year on transfers, which we continue to do this year.

Ultimately, that's the heartbeat of any career mode, so making sure that they're right [is key]. I think the team's done an amazing job this year of really going to

another level with the transfers, making sure that the ones that shouldn't happen don't happen. Then adding the ability this year to make it feel like it's much more of a negotiation, it's a huge, huge change.

To me, I think the work in transfers is fundamental.

What about the new International mode?

It's something that we've been asked to do for years and years; it's something we didn't do last year because we wanted to make sure that the base was right, and now we know we're there we felt it was time to bring it in. What International does ultimately is it gives [player] goals that next layer. Career mode last year was really good, and you wanted to be the best manager you could. If you wanted to go into a lower-league team you would then get better offers from bigger teams, or you could start as a great team and try and win.

There's now another layer. You can start lower league, you can start Premier League, but there's now that other layer of international management. Do you take the first offer you get, which might be from one of the smaller nations, or do you wait and build up your prestige and go on to become England manager? Okay, maybe that's not [so prestigious!] Brazil manager, maybe.

And, as a player you've now got that real drive to get into the international squad. So for me that's the biggest change in career mode since I don't know when. But it's all built on that base of making sure the core mechanics are right for it.

And what can you tell us about Move support for PS3?

Nothing! We've already talked about having Move in the game, and I think we've created something pretty cool. Makes the game fun to play.



PREVIEW



It's all just an elaborate dance, really.



Look! It's Akira from VF! SQUEAL!



DOA isn't sexist now because the men have ludicrous costumes too.



Yeah... see ya.

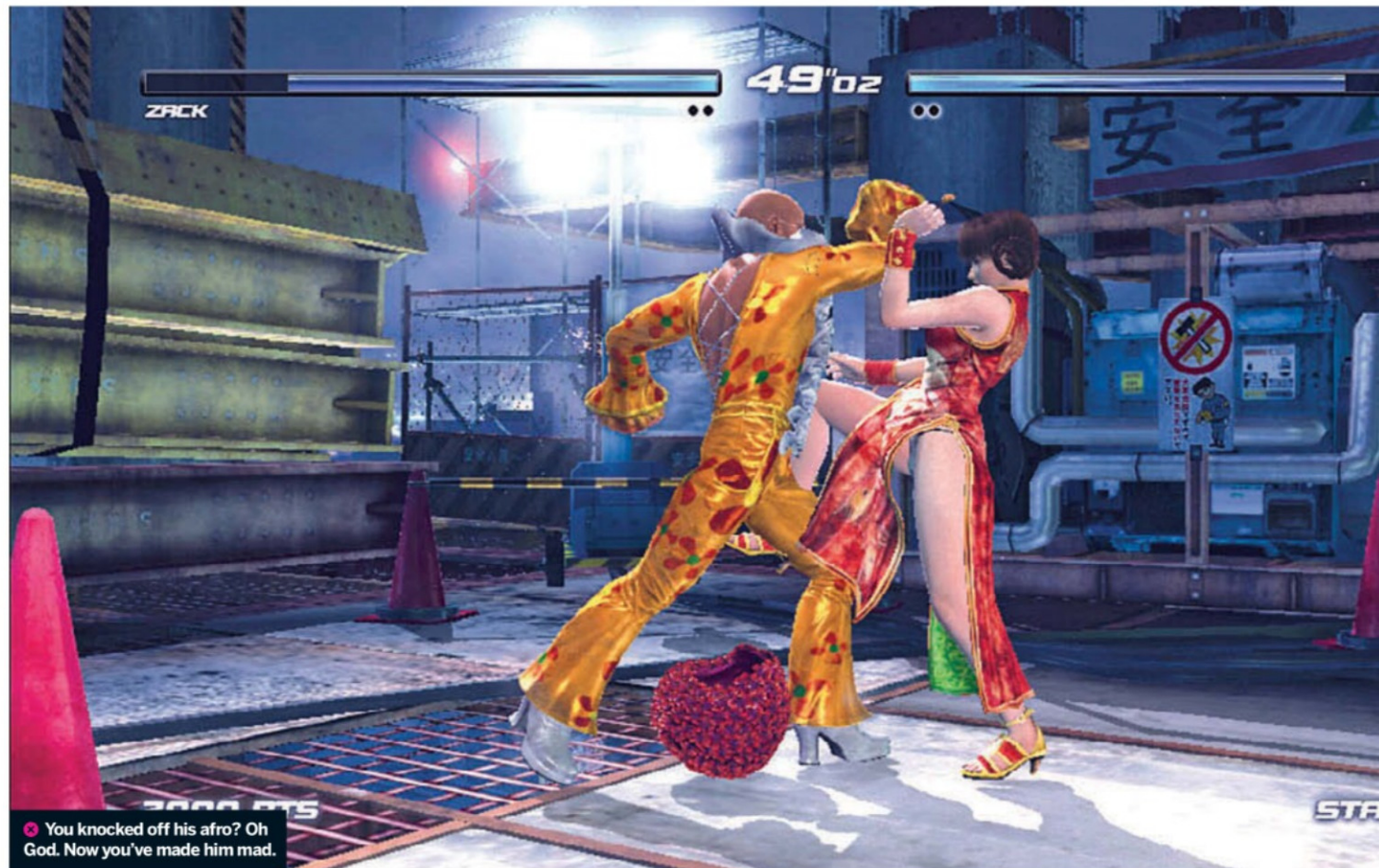


KICKING OFF

Use the environment well

FIGHT NOT GOING your way? Getting a pasting? Just want to show off? If so, then, the power strike mechanic is for you. Charge it up and if you connect you'll be able to punish your opponent and even change the environment the fight takes place in.

It's a neat touch, and it ties nicely into the game's feel. In two-player mode there's little more satisfying than unleashing a *Dragon Ball*-shaming strike to end the match and throw your opponent into explosive oblivion.



You knocked off his afro? Oh God. Now you've made him mad.



RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Dead Or Alive 5

A smashing good time



We live in a world where fighting games have made a bigger comeback than Elvis and Fifties haircuts combined, and as such we're now under an avalanche of the things. *Street Fighter* this. *Marvel* that. *Mortal* something. *King Of* blah. *Virtua* whatever. And, of course, *Dead Or Alive*.

The fifth instalment, power strikes aside – and we'll get to that in a bit – isn't that much different to the games that came before it. There's still a focus on reversals: interrupt your opponent's blows at the right time and you'll break free of their attacks, causing them damage in the process. Of course, it looks cool as well, which is the *Dead Or Alive* way.

Fail to time it right and you'll get an even bigger pasting. And *Dead Or Alive* is all about the punishment. Like its forebears, *DOA5* has Danger Zones – places of the environment that represent big trouble for those forced into them.

Most of the stages have these, and results vary. Hitting an opponent into an explosive barrel in one stage may cause a missile to then crash into them. (You're fighting in the middle of a war zone, okay? We know, it doesn't make any sense.) Smashing another foe into a section of piping on a construction site will cause an explosion, careering them across the stage.

Other Danger Zones change things more permanently. On that same construction site, smashing your enemy into another section of the scenery causes the structure to collapse, throwing the combatants to a lower part of the level.

It's not doing anything entirely new, but it adds an interesting dose of strategy to the fast-paced fights, especially when the new power moves are taken into consideration.

These strikes need to be charged, but for good reason: they give you the opportunity to change the course of the fight. You can use it any time, but the true rewards really

come if you've got less than half health when you unleash it.

Connect with it after you've taken a beating and you get to choose what you slam your opponents into. Want to simply dish out some damage? Propel them into a wall. Want to smash the whole place to pieces like the Incredible Hulk after a particularly vicious stubbed toe? Hit the biggest Danger Zone possible.

It's gimmicky but satisfying. But what of the fighting? Much the same, really. You can't cut someone's head off or pull out their spine, but this isn't the deepest fighter out there. Not that such a decision makes it automatically bad, of course. It's no *Virtua Fighter* or even *Street Fighter IV* when it comes to the learning curve and scope to get better, but then it was never meant to be. *Dead Or Alive* has always been about fast-paced, explosive action and women wearing inappropriate clothes, and there is no let up in that regard here.

Our hands-on time gave us access to a handful of bouts from across the roster, and the fighters we duked it out with were pleasingly different, if archetypical. The standard complement of wrestlers, martial artists and brawlers were all there, and they present a competent challenge even on the default difficulty setting. The stages, too, are worthy of note: fighting against a wig-wearing clown in the middle of a circus is barmy, as is the previously mentioned war zone, and fighting on a structure floating down river rapids. It's a marked disappointment, then, when we fought Tina – a wrestler whose attire is ridiculous, to say the least – in a ring and was disappointed we couldn't explode the entire gym out of its foundations and see it soar off into the sky.

The real appeal of *Dead Or Alive*, like all fighting games, is, of course, how the two-player mode goes. *DOA's* flashy play and Danger Zones are perfect for a quick blast before moving on to the pub, or just better games. Which, from what we've played, pretty much sums up the whole experience.

Dead Or Alive 5 is being developed by Tecmo. Check it out at tecmonoeiamerica.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



Danger Zones



Easy to pick up



Akira's in it



As is that bloke from *Ninja Gaiden*

READ ME

The *Dead Or Alive* series has been running since 1996. It's been much the same since then, mixing reversals and reactions over mega combos.



RELEASE DATE: 2 OCTOBER

ON THE DVD

Watch the video and read the feature. It's the future!

Resident Evil 6

PS3 We have the first 15 minutes on our DVD. Here's what happens...

The opening 15 minutes of *Resi 6* is straightforward tutorial fare, but it's tutorial done with some bombast. It's thrilling, exciting and all that action film adjective stuff we're supposed to throw in, but it's definitely not scary. At all. It should probably be pointed out that Leon's section, which makes up the tutorial, is more of a straight-up actioner than survival horror. As such, expecting to be horrified by rotting arms thrusting through windows to grab you or seeing your partner becoming a 'mere shell of his former self' wasn't something we were really expecting. Plus, who doesn't like action? Idiots, that's who. Still, there's a hell of a lot more game – and four other characters – to get through, so there's so much more we're yet to see. And thanks in no small part to the first 15 minutes, we *want* to see it.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

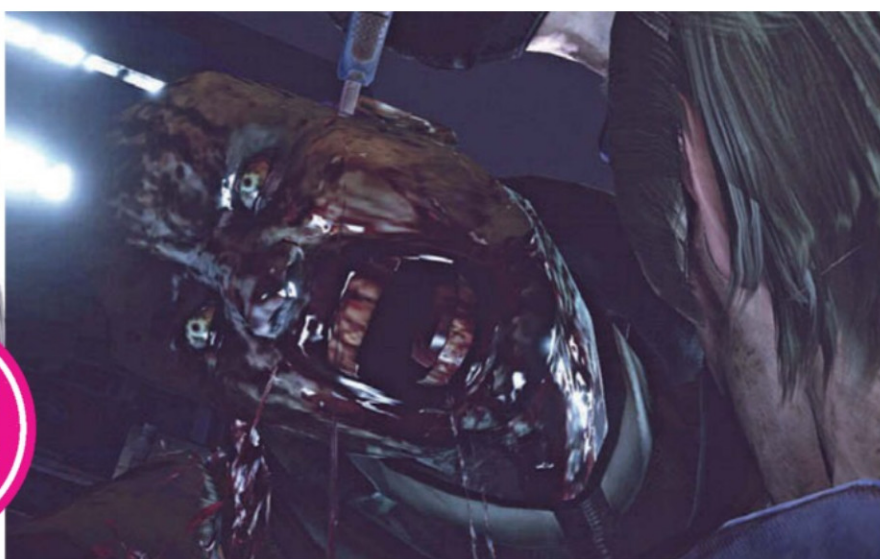
- It's basically three games in one
- Unless the three are rubbish and the one is excellent
- And three games is better than one game, usually
- We're sure that won't be the case here, though

READ ME

If we'd have played 15 minutes of *Resident Evil 2*, we'd be about an eighth of the way through the whole thing, which bodes well for this one.



30 SECONDS Blasted through the air, smashed into a car and stalked by a naughty, heavily-armed helicopter, it doesn't start well for Leon S. Kennedy. In fact, it starts worse for his partner Helena Harper, who is, in medical terms, 'a bit bugged'. The situation is looking grim.



4 MINUTES Turns out you should never turn your back on anything, no matter how dead it is, because the ex-driver of the military vehicle we just robbed isn't happy about losing his herb. But that's the least of his worries, as we've just given him a splitting headache. BECAUSE OF THE KNIFE IN HIS HEAD.



11 MINUTES 34 SECONDS So naturally the helicopter crashes and we're left in yet another area of the city, narrowly avoiding death by train, floor, building and zombie. There's nothing else to do but push on to 'the tower', whatever that cryptic location Leon speaks of is.



2 MINUTES Dragging Harper along, we encounter the first of many QTEs. Simple, unobtrusive, even verging on sensible – they're not the sort of things that annoy. Think more *Resident Evil 4* than *RE5*. More running away from boulders than... well, punching boulders.



3 MINUTES 20 SECONDS We stop for a rest – as anyone would do in a city under siege by an army of the undead – and find the *Resi* staple in a nearby Humvee. After mixing the herb and applying it to Harper, she starts to feel a bit better. Though we're sure we heard a noise...



6 MINUTES 15 SECONDS Harper is better, the driver is dead (again), we've made our way on to the streets and... well, it's not looking good. Mainly because there's such heavy traffic, and the traffic we're talking about is made up of murderous zombie bastards. Control is fast, responsive and satisfying, which is nice.



9 MINUTES 3 SECONDS Due to unforeseen circumstances – crashed fighter jet, petrol truck, fire – there is a series of large, uncontrolled explosions. We run. We avoid the flames and fire. We pretty much can't fail, as it's a tutorial, but it's exciting. "Get to the chopper!" we're told, dreaming of a world where it won't crash.



13 MINUTES 22 SECONDS Speaking of avoiding death, this happens too. Naturally, it involves another QTE and, as we've found through all of our time with *Resi 6*, it's a fitting and, importantly, sensible quick-time event. Though it does mean we've been more than a couple of minutes without having to fight a zombie.



14 MINUTES 59 SECONDS And whatever the hell this thing is, it isn't a zombie. But Leon recognises it, and Harper seems barely fazed by its appearance – they've met it before. When? Why? How? And is Ramon Salazar in the game? Dozens of hours of *Resident Evil 6* will explain this, and much more.

PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER

Need For Speed: Most Wanted

The best in the business is back

PS3

We know what you're thinking: didn't *Need For Speed: Most Wanted* already come out? Say, about seven or so years ago? Yes, of course it did. But you should know by now that publishers don't bother sticking numbers on the end of their games any more; they just wait for a while and reboot them. *Tomb Raider*, we're looking at you.

Usually we'd get all up in arms about this, but *Most Wanted* actually looks pretty darn good. After the success of *NFS: Hot Pursuit*, it's no surprise that EA has roped in *Burnout* developer Criterion to get the job done, and once again it looks like a hit.

Not convinced? Step this way...

Most Wanted is being developed by Criterion. Find out all the latest information at blog.criteriongames.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- It's a *Need For Speed* game
- Criterion is developing it
- See above
- Twice

READ ME

After the debacle that was *Need For Speed: The Run*, Criterion Games returns to the series to bring it back on – yes – track.

1

THE WORLD IS YOURS

Most Wanted, unlike *Hot Pursuit*, will take place in an open world. Those of you who remember the early days of *Burnout Paradise* will no doubt flinch like a bullied younger brother at the thought of Criterion tackling another open racing game.

While we wouldn't begrudge you this response – *Paradise* was one of the most infuriating games ever made at that point – there's reason to be hopeful that *Most Wanted* won't be anywhere near as bad. Most of this optimism comes from the fact that Criterion constantly iterated on *Paradise* after it was released, fixing its many, many flaws – no quick restart option? – and even adding content like motorbikes.

We're not saying that bikes will feature, but the thing to take from the experience of *Paradise* is that Criterion should now know how to create a brilliant open world racer, so we're expecting the best one yet. Sorry, *Test Drive*, that's just the way it is.



2

AUTOMATIC FOR THE PEOPLE

Remember Autolog, the cross-platform boasting system that enabled you to upload your scores to the cloud and compete against other players? Well, it's back, and EA is insisting that it's better than ever. The point of Autolog 2 is to increase competition to levels not seen in the first game, providing rolling challenges and forging rivalries between players. The "Most Wanted" part of the title refers to how much carnage you're causing in the world; you'll have to outrun not only your friends but also the cops if you want to advance up the ladder.

Autolog has already proven to be a stellar system, and the new additions should make it even better. It all ties in to an improved multiplayer mode that EA is promising will eliminate the need for hanging around, waiting for challengers. Instead, you'll hop into a race as soon as you get the challenge, or notice that you've lost ground on the most wanted list.

Speed Points are the game's currency, and these are gained from almost everything you do in the world. Breaking records is one way to gain them, as is winning races, but you'll also level up by outrunning the cops or launching yourself off ramps and other jumps. Which sounds brilliant. Criterion is the king of arcade racing games, and if *Most Wanted* can channel both *Burnout* and *Hot Pursuit* then we're in for a massive treat. The fact that we can then goad players on 360 with our obviously better scores is just the icing on the cake.

BOOYAKASHA

When the history books are written and the 2000s chronicled, up there in the section marked 'awfulness', right alongside the recession, terrorism and Liverpool winning the Champions League will be self-consciously 'street' attitudes.

Be it in music, film or videogames, street is rubbish. Sadly the old *Most Wanted* was all 'street' – just swaggering nonsense. It gave us the fear.

Most Wanted 2012 will mercifully be mostly free of all this bull. There will obviously still be your standard assortment of streeted-up racing cars – which we hope includes Micras with big glowing lights on them – but rest assured that the heavyweight marques will also make their bow: Porsche has already featured, and given *Hot Pursuit*'s commitment to top-end automobiles, we'd be surprised if others didn't follow.

3



NOT ARCADE GAME

4 Driving in *Most Wanted: Version 1* could be best described as... as... hmm. Forgettable, apparently. It's been released on PlayStation Store though, as PlayStation 3's later release than Xbox 360 meant it was old news by the time Sony's console was released, and revisiting the title shows the handling to be decent but sliding (sorry) into arcade territory.

Most Wanted: Version 2 will be different. Criterion made its name on the *Burnout* and *Hot Pursuit* series, yet *Most Wanted* will steer away (double sorry) from similar arcade handling. It's not exactly a full-on simulator though, with a job vacancy for *Most Wanted* staff describing the game as containing "terrifying jumps, insane crashes and epic car chases."

Criterion themselves describe the handling as "deep, physical and fun" but they're hardly going to be impartial judges, right? So we'll have to wait until November to see if it manages to be all three.



GOOD GRAPHICS?!

How good will *Most Wanted* look? It's hard to quantify with words like 'Quite good' or 'Eight on the Scoville rating of hotness', so let's try and use facts instead.

Criterion's previous effort, *Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit*, ran at 30 frames per second. This was mostly for the lighting system shown off in the night-time races (particularly when those thunderstorms came rolling in). The engine was an advanced iteration of Chameleon, used for *Burnout Paradise*.

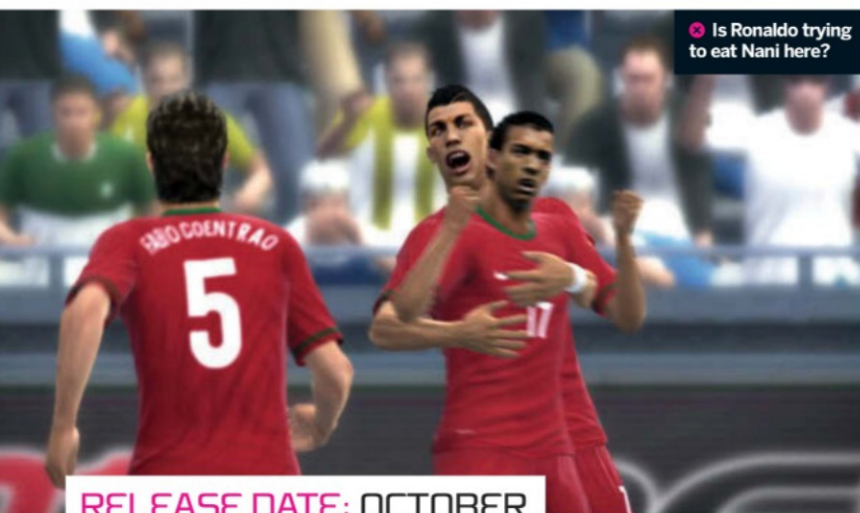
Why is this relevant? When EA handed the series to Black Box for *The Run*, the engine switched to Frostbite and the visuals weren't quite as impressive. Back on Criterion's territory with their engine, *Most Wanted* will look scorching.

The frames-per-second being at 30 means there's room for that number to jump up to 60, although whether this is possible with the open world structure planned for *Most Wanted* is debatable.

5



PREVIEW



RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER

PES 2013

Back on top

PS3 PES is back. No, really. Don't believe us? That's okay, we weren't sure ourselves until going hands-on with the game. Now, however, we feel pretty safe in saying that this is the best PES of this generation, and will run FIFA very close this year. In some respects it's already the better game.

The passing, for example, is leagues ahead of its rival. It already was in last year's game, and it feels even better here. With full control over the pace and direction of your passes (including a fully manual pass option for the Xavis out there), PES's midfield exchanges are incredibly authentic while still remaining fun. Because the system is so well implemented, it changes the way you set out against teams: Spain need to be harried and harassed on the ball, (because if Iniesta gets his foot on it you're in big trouble) whereas more direct dribblers like Ronaldo and Portugal will require a different approach.

It's all part of PES's system to make teams feel like, well, teams and not collections of individuals, and the new Player ID system backs

it up. Gerrard, for example, plays like his real-life counterpart, spraying the ball around and carrying the ball forward with the ball, legs pecking down quickly and arms chopping from side to side in the process. Each side feels different, something FIFA has struggled with for years.

So the good stuff is still good, and changes have been made to correct the nagging faults that afflicted PES 2012. Most obvious is the shooting: formerly it felt like you were kicking a balloon around, such was the pace it would leave players' boots. Now it feels like you're actually connecting with a football, thundering off the laces on hard shots and curling delightfully when hit with finesse.

It all combines to make match play a delight. There are still problems: heading is rubbish, and there aren't enough goalkeeping animations. If these get fixed, PES will very nearly be back to its best. Between this and FIFA, football fans are in for a banner year.

PES 2013 is being developed by Konami. Check them out at www.konami-pes2013.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Shooting is fixed
- Players behave like their real-life counterparts
- Passing is still best-in-class
- Likenesses are really very good

READ ME

PES 2013 will be the last game to use the current engine. The next iteration will be powered by the FOX engine, which is also the one behind MGS *Revengeance*.



Here's Ronaldo and his strange running style.

Germany scoring against England. Also, water is wet.



THE REAL DEAL

Master League should be better than ever

THE NEW PLAYER ID system should make Master League even better than ever. Which, if we're honest, is fairly dangerous, given how addictive it was last year. The mode's appeal has always been in building a team from nothing, and getting that one good player who changes the way you play. Konami's new additions should pave the way for many more glorious campaigns.

LAST LOOK



✶ This is definitely the most exciting screenshot you'll ever see in Play!



SAIL AWAY, SAIL AWAY, SAIL AWAY

Choose your path wisely

THERE IS MUCH nuance influencing the smaller elements of *Port Royale 3*. To form a convoy, you need to get all the ships over to the quartermaster in the nearest harbour, where the largest ship then represents the full convoy. This gives you a higher attack strength and more storage but even then, you have to decide if the convoy will be used for trading or attacking.



✶ Apart from this screenshot, which is full of islands and numbers, our two favourite things!



✶ Mercifully, not a map. Unmercifully, still not full of fires or explosions or rock music.

RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER

Port Royale 3

What're you buying?



Pirates and merchants. That's a gaming combination as exciting and alluring as papers and carrots. Pirates aren't as good as ninjas, and neither of them are as good as robot dinosaurs, while the only time merchants have been good is in *Resident Evil 4* with the pervy guy who looks like he's going to flash but actually has RPGs, shotguns and grenades tucked inside his trenchcoat. *Port Royale 3* should be on to a loser, then, given that it is (1) a game about pirates and (2) a game about merchants.

But lo! What is this stirring in our gaming crotch caused by its mysterious ways? Why, it's *Port Royale 3*, scratching our geek itch in all the right places! And that's because we see words like 'trading' and 'building' and 'open-ended' – which is technically two words together, but shhh. All of those things remind us of *Civilization Revolution* on PS3 or *Sid Meier's Pirates!* on PSP, and this is a Very Good Thing.

While it's not much to look at, *Port Royale 3* is aimed squarely at the strategic gamer. Buying and selling, for example, has a direct effect on supply and demand and therefore prices. You have to pick and choose the right spots to offload your supplies so you don't unbalance the world's economy and make things trickier for yourself. Same for buying. Buy from the same port over and over again and they'll jack the prices. If it sounds dull, this is not and never will be the game for you. It's for strategic gamers. Like we said. Although you can go in all cannons blazing if that's the life you prefer.

And it's that choice that *Port Royale 3* is relying on, as it allows you to play out the part of treasure hunter, trader or buccaneer. It won't win any awards for looks or sex appeal, but if it's strategy you're after, *Port Royale 3* scratches that itch better than most.

Kalypso is the studio responsible for **Port Royale 3**, with updates gently and quietly bobbing around at Port-Royale3.com

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Trading!
- Sailing!
- Buccaneering!
- Strategising!

READ ME

The first game in the series was called *Port Royale: Gold, Power And Pirates*. It was a game centred around gold, power and pirates.

PREVIEW

RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 2012

Dishonored



The Best Game Of
The Year. Maybe

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

Looks great Sounds great Plays great Is great. Great!

Dishonored is being developed by Arkane Studios. Check them out at arkane-studios.com



READ ME

Dishonored is being created by one of the guys that helped make *Deus Ex* a contender for best game ever made, with back up from the guy that helped design *Half-Life 2*. Pretty impressive stuff, we're sure you'll agree.

Go Your Own Way

The greatest aspect of *Dishonored* is the choice that it offers players. Completing a mission requires a mixture of cunning, skill and imagination on the part of who's in control. After sneaking into a lavish masquerade ball by hopping a high wall and stealing an invite, we assassinated the target by seducing her, finishing the mission away from the guards. Playing again, we could have possessed a fish, snuck in through the sewers, and killed her in the toilet, and a million different ways in between.

The Beautiful Game

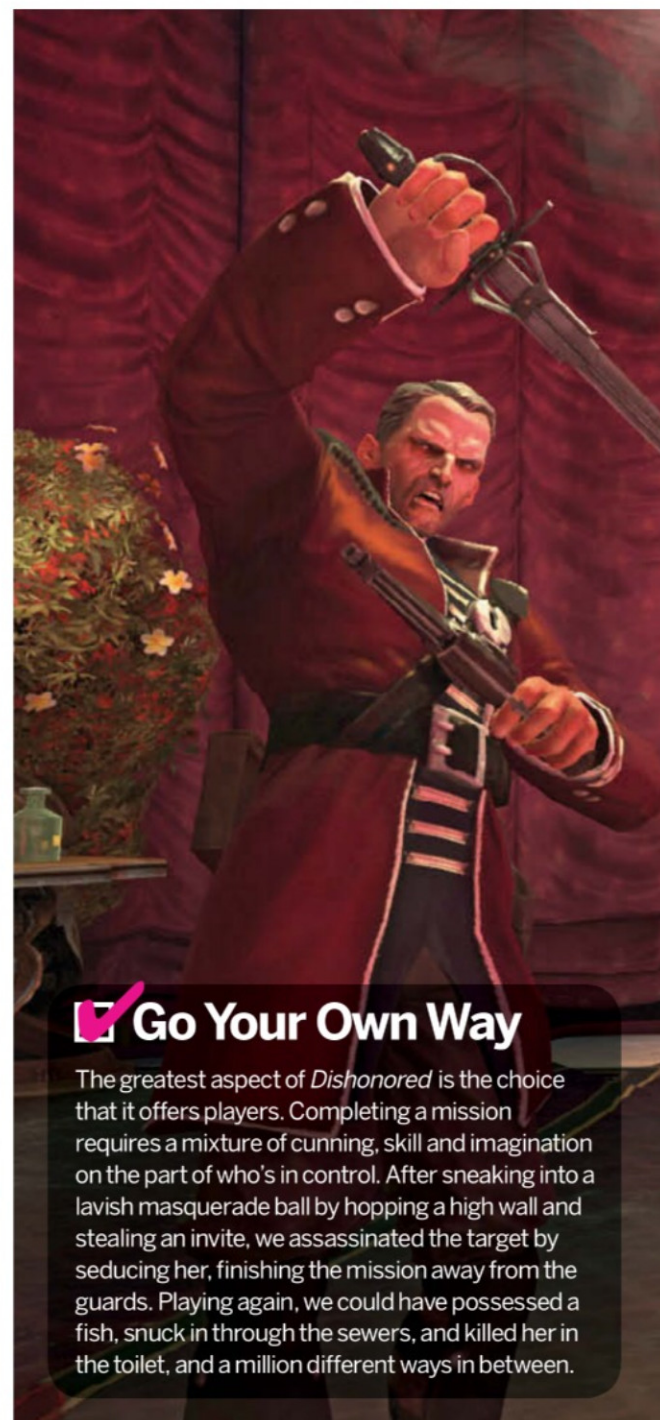
About as far from the grey military shooter look as you can get, *Dishonored's* style perfectly suits its setting. Comparisons to *BioShock* are valid, but there's a far more painterly style to the world Arkane has created. If it all looks a bit familiar, however, then it should be no surprise that Viktor Antonov, the genius behind *Half-Life 2's* amazing world, helped to create it. If you think it looks good here, then wait until you see it moving. In fact, don't wait: get to **Play's** YouTube now and check it out there.



Lethal Intervention

Dishonored may see you cast as a supernatural assassin, but that doesn't mean you're free to head out and kill everyone you see. Well, you can, but it won't be forgotten. Kill too many people and more environmental hazards will appear, such as the flesh-eating rats that carry the plague that is afflicting the city. It will also change the ending you receive, and not for the better, we'd wager.

The opposite is also true as well; it's possible to go through the whole game without killing anyone. Even the targets that the game picks out for you can be reasoned with.





✗ Best-Laid Plans

In all honesty, it's very difficult to find anything bad to say about *Dishonored*. Having played over two hours of the game, we're confident in saying that it is – barring a legendary screw up between now and October – one of the best games of the year. The only thing we can think of that even constitutes a slight worry is length: we're going to be gutted if all of that creativity leads to a short game.

That said, we're absolutely convinced that won't be the case. So really, our only real worry is that the game will be so good that it will make other games seem insignificant next to it.



✓ Story Time

For those that haven't heard of *Dishonored* yet, its story is as novel as its setting. Taking place in an alternate world that resembles a plague-ridden Victorian Britain, the player takes control of Corvo, former Lord Protector of the Empress. We say former, as he's been framed for murdering the Empress and kidnapping her daughter, by conniving nobles keen to seize power.

Vowing revenge, Corvo is backed by a group of rebels who give him missions and equipment. His greatest ally however is The Outsider, an otherworldly being that gives supernatural powers. Which is pretty handy when you've got to kill a lot of people.



✓ Use The Force

Again, in a similar way to *BioShock*, players will be able to customise 'their' version of Corvo. By finding runes scattered around the world, Corvo can augment his supernatural abilities, which loosely fall into lethal/stealth categories. 'Blink' is one of the most fundamental, enabling players to teleport short distances. Others, such as the Force Push-style Windblast, are more offensive. Combining these powers is pretty much a game in itself, with some impressive feats available to those with the imagination to match the power, but you'll have to choose wisely: not all will be available to you in just the one playthrough.



RELEASE DATE: Q3 2012

LittleBigPlanet Karting

Wait! Hey! It's not rubbish! Stop leaving!

PS3 There's a point, while playing *LittleBigPlanet Karting*, where your brain finally just accepts this is *LittleBigPlanet* and *ModNation Racers* squashed together into one single, amorphous blob. And from what we've managed to digest of the cutesy speed-'em-up so far, this is a good thing.

Because on the one hand you have *ModNation Racers* – a series that lives in recent memory as a bit of a waste of time. This might put you off. But remember: first, the original game was an excellent karting title. Second, it was developed by United Front, while the handheld games were not. Third, *LBP Karting* is developed by United Front too. Huzzah! What this means is you've got the proven pedigree of a studio that knows how to make good karting games, making a karting game.

On the other hand you have the *LittleBigPlanet* influence. Beyond simply dressing up Sackboy in a dress and making him roar (because why not?), there are the distinctly *LBP* touches to everything: the pod, the ability to share your creations with the world, stickers, Stephen Fry. If

just one single element was missing, it wouldn't have been *LittleBigPlanet*. Not one single element is missing. *LBP Karting* nails that part too.

We've only been able to play a few tracks and mini-games so far, but the early signs are positive. Standard races are nippy and zippy, with shortcut-laden tracks giving us a good idea of the frolics to expect – and a vague idea of the sorts of madness others playing the game will create and share with us. The mini-games are mere distractions and are certainly not a main focus, but they do offer a welcome break. Even if carrying eggs around in our kart did get us some bemused looks from others in the office.

So it's looking pretty promising so far. We don't know, however, if the seeming apathy of the gaming audience at large can be overcome by *LBP Karting*, though. Does anybody care if it doesn't have Mario in it? And does that matter if you can just make your own Mario in the game? Time will tell.

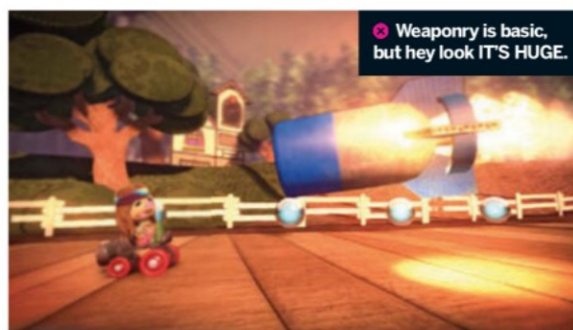
LittleBigPlanet Karting is being developed by United Front Studios. Check out littlebigplanet.com/karting for more details.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ◻ A mix of (the good) *ModNation Racers*...
- ◻ Karting is fun, mini-games are fun
- ◻ And the (ever-excellent) *LittleBigPlanet*
- ◻ And creating things is even more fun. Ahhhh...

READ ME

You could actually create racing games on *LittleBigPlanet 2*, such is the mad way in which you can make ANYTHING in that game.



LITTLEBIGVITA

Better than *ModNation* on Vita by default

THERE'S BEEN NO official word on *LBP Karting* making its way to Vita, but we'd be surprised if Sony didn't hand development duties to another studio to knock out a handheld clone of the console version. Unless, of course, United Front is already working on a Vita version. Who knows? Not us, and that's why we're having to wildly speculate.



❖ Goalies are difficult to beat, especially on your first few goes.

FIFA ON ICE



RELEASE DATE: 14 SEPTEMBER

NHL 13

Skating to where the puck is going to be

PS3

As one of the few North American sports games that gains traction in the UK, it's easy to see why the *NHL* series is popular: it's like football, but faster, and you get to smash people into glass. It's the sport of the future.

NHL 13 is no different, of course, and is just as much fun to play as its predecessors. You don't have to be an aficionado of the game to enjoy yourself here. This isn't *Madden* with its trillions of plays and rules, after all.

Nope, you pretty much just skate around, attempting to break people's spines and score goals. It's a fast game, but one that also requires some tactical thinking,

especially if you want to get past the very capable keepers. Playing the game for the first time at EA's Vancouver office, we found ourselves in the middle of some pleasantly enjoyable back-and-forth matches, featuring everything from slaloming runs to tense, crunching battles for territory and possession.

Off the ice, EA is making a big noise about its new dynasty mode, GM Connected. By taking the popular *Be A GM* – general manager, for those of you not into US sports or wrestling – mode from previous games and moving it online, EA is giving players the option of partaking in 30-team leagues that feature 750 players.

It sounds very cool indeed. EA, like most publishers, is keen to position its product as a 'platform' or a 'service' to stop you trading it in – you pesky consumer, you – and with GM Connected it looks like it's got a pretty good hook.

Also of note is NHL Moments Live. A scenario mode in all but name, the most memorable moments from the 2011-12 NHL season will be on the disc for players to emulate or change. Complementing these, there will also be regular updates featuring moments from the ongoing season, so if you've had a bad week you can digitally erase the cause of your frustration, or if you've had a good one, emphasise your elation.

It's another solid package from EA Sports, then, and one that will definitely appeal to both rabid hockey fans and those that pick it up in September as a complement to *FIFA*.

NHL 13 is being developed by EA Canada. Check it out at easports.com for gameplay videos and a lot more.



❖ You can change the controls to two-button NHL '94 style if you want.



❖ One of these two people will be dead after this exchange.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ❑ It's ice hockey
- ❑ Especially when it's being developed by EA Canada
- ❑ And ice hockey is awesome
- ❑ That is all

READ ME

The latest in the long-running *NHL* series enables you to do everything you could before, only this time in a more realistic fashion. Sweet.

THE AI WILL KILL US ALL

Your opponents are more intelligent than ever

WE LOVE EA Sports because it makes good games. We also love it because it brands EVERYTHING. Its newest toy is Hockey IQ, which means that the AI can react to all of the other players on the ice. Which is something you thought might have been included before, but hey, it's here now. It just means your team is smarter, and will take up better positions, okay?



RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 2013

Crysis 3

Eager for Crysis 3 news, **Play** held a bow and arrow to the head of producer Michael Read and made him talk



Which areas of *Crysis 3* would you say are most improved over *Crysis 2*?

I would say that every aspect of the game has been improved. From the story and gameplay to the audio and graphics. It's all been an evolution over time and a product of the lessons we learned from the previous *Crysis* games we developed. We've also been doing a large number of focus groups along the way with people who were big *Crysis 1* fans, *Crysis 2* fans, or fans of both, as well as people who have never played the *Crysis* series before. It's helped to give us a great perspective on the current game.

Will *Crysis 3* have the linear structure of *Crysis 2*, or be more open-ended like the original?

The word 'linear' is such a broad term and we don't feel that it represents *Crysis 2* as a whole. In some ways it was a linear experience, but I feel that leans more towards the perception created in the visual style we used to create the NYC urban grid. We want this portion to be a fixed storytelling experience and have the action portions played out in whatever way you want.

What can we expect to see from the Nanosuit this time?

The two biggest changes in the Nanosuit I can talk about right now are the upgrade and hacking systems. We have removed the old system and refined it quite a lot since *Crysis 2*. It's going to be a lot more personalised this time around and allow players to create class-type combinations to suit their style of play. In addition to this, we also have the hacking system, which we showcased at E3. What this allows the player to do is interact with the environment in several different ways and experiment with yet another tool in the box. For instance, players can choose to hack a CELL turret, which will turn it against them for a period of time. For kicks I will throw another one in there too. We are also looking at decoupling the sprint from the main energy as well.

Why New York again?

Well, you see, New York is really the epicentre of all that is evil; the Yankees were there, and let's not forget about the Jets and the Giants! Seriously, though, there is a partial truth to that in terms of why this spot in particular is as far as the

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?



It's got the jungle of *Crysis*...



...and the city of *Crysis 2*



Sprinting might not take up any power



And hopefully the AI is fixed



story goes for this part in the series. This is something that I don't want to give away now, as it's an integral piece of the story in *Crysis 3*.

What can we expect from the multiplayer for *Crysis 3*?

You can expect a much more refined style and a mix of game modes to match everybody's tastes. Twelve new maps, eight modes of play including two unique to *Crysis*, more weapons and attachments including all the alien weapons from the single-player side, interactive environments, and a dynamic achievement system we call the 'New York Feed'.

Crytek has always been known for pushing console technology. What does Crytek hope to see from next-gen consoles?

More power to give us the ability to push things even further? Let's be honest here: the current generation of consoles is the longest period we've EVER had for a single generation. Technology is advancing so quickly now that PCs are light years ahead, and delivering a far more immersive experience. Something scalable would be a nice addition. Sony's purchase of Gaikai is also a big hint of where things are going as well. The next five to ten years will show us new and exciting technology changes brought to home entertainment.

Crysis 3 is being developed by Crytek. Check it out at crytek.com

READ ME

In Crytek's third shot at FPS glory on PS3, *Crysis 3* is aiming to be a perfect mixture of the best bits from the first and second games.



❖ New York's not looking so hot now, is it?



❖ Bow and arrow: weapon of the future, ridiculously.



❖ How is that going to be effective?

STORYTELLERS

Crysis 3 goes in a new direction

ACCLAIMED SCI-FI WRITER

Richard Morgan was brought in for *Crysis 2*, but not *3*. Why? Michael Read explains, "Richard was great to work with and brought his unique sci-fi style to the brand for *Crysis 2*. We were happy with how that turned out. We wanted to try out another direction for *Crysis 3* and [British sci-fi author] Steven Hall really fit that bill for us."



RELEASE DATE: Q4 2012

Ratchet & Clank: QForce

A load of old Clank? Unlikely.

PS3

It's safe to say *Ratchet & Clank* aren't as relevant as they used to be, as opposed to the days when it was dangerous to say because deluded fans would shout "YES THEY ARE" and threaten us with strongly-worded emails and the like. Oh, how those emails scared us. With Spyro and Crash nursing creaky joints and applying for jobs in *PlayStation All-Stars Battle Royale*, *Ratchet & Clank* has floundered around finding a new identity. The most recent attempt was the co-op infused *Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One* (68% in issue 211). That was a misfire.

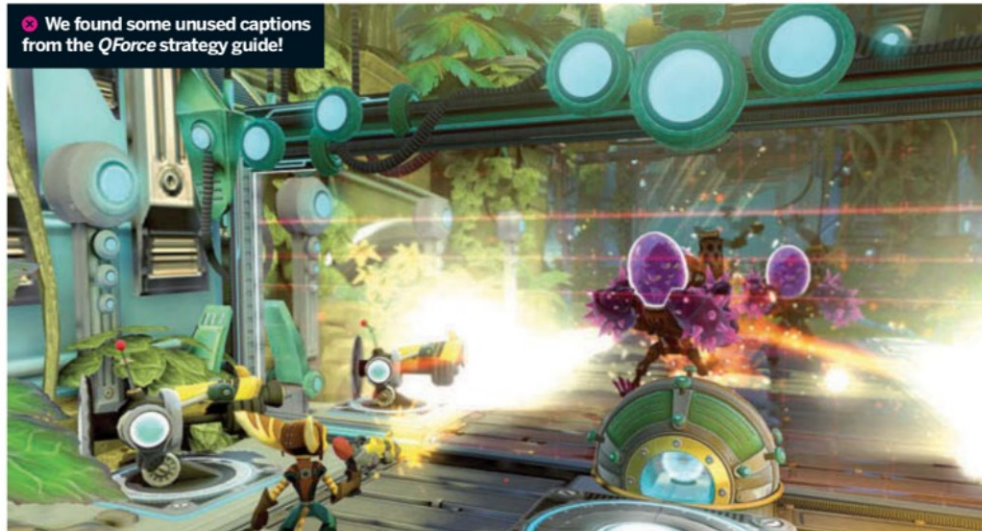
Tower defence! That's what *Ratchet & Clank* needed. Right? It's what Insomniac is gambling on anyway. The original message from Insomniac is that *QForce* was set to be a back-to-basics affair with classic camera angle, weapons and gameplay that the older titles in the series built their success upon. You'll be able to play as Ratchet, Clank or

Captain Qwark with split-screen and online co-op is supported (though presumably not to the same level as *All 4 One*). Insomniac has also promised another online mode, though declined to reveal any details further than that.

So the new element is tower defence. It's certainly becoming a more prominent part of gaming, showing up in *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* and *Starhawk*, and now it will prop up *QForce* as well. You have to build and then defend a base against alien invasions, with the game stretched out across five levels on three different planets. Insomniac isn't saying exactly how the tower defence here in *Ratchet & Clank* works yet but with the release due 'this Fall', expect them to spill the info on that sooner rather than later.

Ratchet & Clank: QForce is being developed by Insomniac, responsible for the *Resistance* series and currently working on *Overstrike*. Keep up to date with them at insomniacgames.com

✖ We found some unused captions from the *QForce* strategy guide!



✖ Shoot the spikes off, then shake him firmly by the hand.



✖ Write the name of the boss on an envelope, leave it by the lasers.



LEARNING LESSONS

What went wrong with *Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One*?

YOU COULD see what Insomniac was trying. *Ratchet & Clank* has a lot of characters. Co-op is a big trend. Hey! Let's combine the two! Except it didn't quite work out. The intricate platforming designed for one player had to be opened up and levelled out somewhat to allow four characters to scamper around, and that took a huge chunk of *Ratchet's* personality and challenge away. It also didn't feel quite as pretty or detailed, being zoomed out to allow for those four characters again. The short version is *QForce* won't have the compromise that tarnished *All 4 One*, and we're grateful.

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- ❑ *QForce* goes back to its awesome roots
- ❑ Which we're actually not sure about
- ❑ And has tower defence elements!
- ❑ Unless it's in *Plants Vs Zombies*, obviously

READ ME

Ratchet & Clank will be ten years old this November, having debuted on PS2 back in 2002. Time flies! Well, it actually just passes.



RELEASE DATE: 12 OCTOBER

WRC 3

"Six right into four left, 80 then hairpin right"
CRASH "Ah, no – left..."

PS3

There's never been any doubting Black Bean Games' enthusiasm for the sports it develops games for, and there's always been something enjoyable about its previous entries to the *WRC* series. But there's been that element of presentation and throwaway fun lacking that has put off all but the most committed to the cause.

So it is that *WRC 3* brings to the fore far better presentation (see boxout) and a range of extra modes to break up the straightforward rally championship action of the last couple of games. If you're thinking 'Have they taken a leaf from *Dirt*'s book?' then you're on the right track, likely with a 12-second lead because you're *that damn right*.

Yes, *WRC 3* features nine mini-games to break up your usual time trials. The likes of the gate contest, where you have to smash as many coloured gates as possible, and the survival

contest, where your car is constantly falling to pieces, offer some fun little distractions. It's not the sort of thing that will make *WRC 3* essential, but it's good to see extra elements thrown in to keep players playing that little bit more than they might otherwise.

Other than that it's as you would expect (but prettier): rallying from a more simulation-focused angle, sure to appeal to enthusiasts of the real-life sport as much as those who just like driving in games. With the added elements opening *WRC 3* up to a wider audience than might have given it a look before, the question is if Black Bean's effort will have enough about it to take on the current big boy *Dirt*, or if it will end up another also-ran, forgotten about and with its bumper hanging off in a ditch. Possibly on fire. In the rain. In Wales.

WRC 3 is being developed by Black Bean Studios. Check out wrcthegame.com for more details.



As you would expect in rally, you spend a lot of time driving sideways.

Different track types, as you'd expect, handle differently.



LOOKIE LOOKIE

They aren't everything, they are something

PREVIOUS *WRC* GAMES have had something going for them, but have often fallen short from a visual standpoint. So it's good news that the two-year development time on the visual engine has been put to good use – *WRC 3* doesn't have *GT5*'s levels of looks, but it is surprisingly pretty in places. Especially that sunlight dappling through the leaves.



WHAT MAKES THIS GAME GREAT?

- Another solid, enjoyable recreation of rallying
- More simulation-focused than the increasingly arcade *Dirt*
- A hefty graphical update genuinely helps things
- Though it does bring in some *Dirt*-like elements

READ ME

This is actually the second time *WRC 3* has come to a PlayStation console, with the last one arriving in 2003 from Motorstorm's Evolution Studios.



“ With Splinter Cell
Blacklist, we’ve
listened to our fans and are
providing a wide variety
of gameplay styles ”

TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL BLACKLIST

CREATIVE DIRECTOR **MAXIME BELAND** TALKS ABOUT ACTION VS STEALTH, GHOSTING THROUGH LEVELS, AND ASSASSIN'S CREED INSPIRATION

How far in the future is *Splinter Cell: Blacklist* set? Fisher is now the head of Fourth Echelon – but what exactly does that mean for the gameplay? Also, Fisher looks quite a bit younger, what was the decision for this aesthetic change?

A couple of years ago, we decided we weren't going to focus on specific years and timelines in the *Splinter Cell* franchise. With our story taking place in the modern day, Sam Fisher continues to be the experienced and mature hero in *Blacklist*. Advancements and innovation in performance capture technology have given us the opportunity to create a highly immersive and realistic game for our fans. The performance capture technology we are incorporating in *Blacklist* renders a 1:1 model of our actor. Because of this, Sam Fisher appears a little more youthful – but he's still an experienced and deadly elite operative. We feel confident fans will think so too once they have a chance to get their hands on this game.

The gameplay we've seen is heavy on the action side of *Splinter Cell* – is this representative of the whole game? Is there still a market for stealth-based action games?

Absolutely there is still a market for stealth-based games and gameplay, and we continue to see some of the biggest games now showcasing stealth elements. With *Splinter Cell Blacklist*, we've listened to our fans and are providing a wide variety of gameplay styles. Gamers will have the freedom to choose their play-style – they can ghost through levels employing stealth manoeuvres such as abductions



and non-lethal take downs, they can choose to tank the map with a vast artillery of weapons and explosives, or they can play a combination of stealth and action.

Will *Blacklist* go down the 'multiple-choice' route and enable players to approach missions in different ways? How about branching narratives? If not, why?

Most of the maps feature a sandbox type experience and players will be able to choose where they go and how they navigate each mission. This is the multi-path level design *Splinter Cell* is famous for. Given the scope and variety of the game, we're not offering branching narratives. It's an opportunity for us to offer true moral choices to the player during interrogation scenes. These moral choices enhance the experience of being Sam Fisher, the ultimate special operative, however these choices will not affect the outcome of the game.

We saw Fisher's new athleticism and free-running abilities – what's your response to suggestions *Blacklist* is a "modern-day *Assassin's Creed*"?

As game creators we are always inspired by the best games out there, and we are fortunate enough to work for a company that creates some of the leading games in the business. I wanted Sam to have fluid navigation and we've completely rebuilt how Sam moves through his world and his enemies. Once the player masters moves like Killing In Motion, they will be able to play seamlessly through the environment, taking out enemies quickly and efficiently.

What has the *Splinter Cell* team learnt from the success of the *Assassin's Creed* franchise in development/franchise building/gameplay terms?

At Ubisoft we collaborate and support each other to push all our games

further. It's really the beauty of working for a global creative company like Ubisoft. *Assassin's Creed* does an excellent job building a consistent and compelling game universe that expands successfully beyond the console game into mobile, web, comics, books and even film with last year's *Embers*. We certainly look to model that success with *Splinter Cell* as we expand our own game universe in a connected and integrated way that will really excite fans of the franchise.

How will you keep PS3 players up to date with the story given *Splinter Cell: Conviction* has yet to arrive on PS3?

Splinter Cell Blacklist is a gripping, realistic story ripped from today's headlines that can be enjoyed as a standalone game even if it's your first Sam Fisher experience. We purposely designed the narrative in a way that would allow anyone to jump right into the series. We do have nods to *Conviction* for fans of the series, alongside other classic references to the *Splinter Cell* canon – and we feel these will definitely keep the fans engaged and immersed in the story.

Will classic franchise elements, such as split-jumping and body moving return?

Body moving is back in *Splinter Cell Blacklist*. Fans will also enjoy the twists on franchise classics such as our innovation with the sticky shocker. In addition, the most requested feature by fans will see its return with *Blacklist*. That's right – Spies Vs. Mercs is back and we can't wait to show you more in the months to come.

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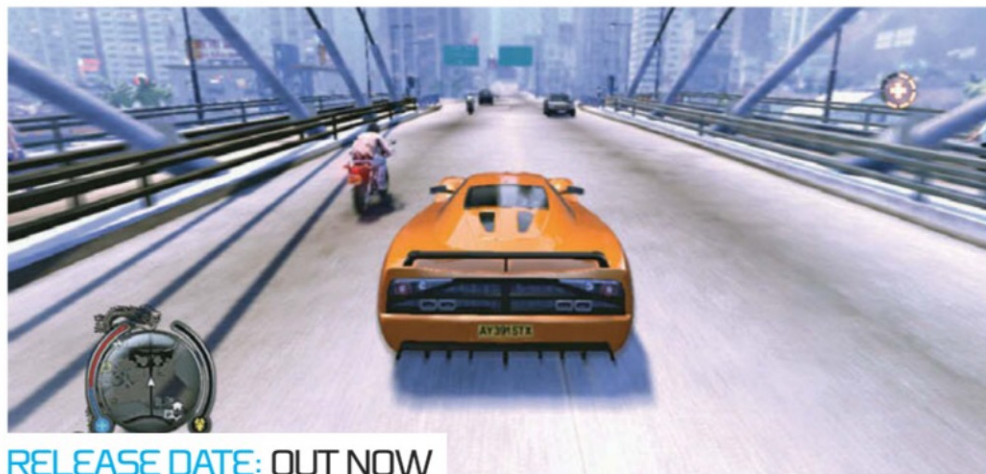
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REVIEWS

We play games and give them a score



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Sleeping Dogs

Truly, there is some crime here in Hong Kong



DETAILS

Publisher
Square Enix
Developer
United Front Games
Price
£49.99
Players
1
Genre
Sandbox
Age Rating
18+
Website
sleepingdogs.net
Twitter
@sleepingdogs
Facebook
facebook.com/sleepingdogsgame

PS3

On one hand, someone has just been brutally disfigured, tortured and ultimately murdered, positioned to be discovered and serve as a warning that the people who did this are absolutely not to be messed with. On the other hand, we just got a trophy for hitting someone in the face while wearing nothing but underpants and a Panama hat, then partook in a mission where we had to 'rescue' a wedding cake.

Sleeping Dogs is, to us, the game that straddles the divide between its contemporaries: it's far less po-faced and up itself than the as yet unbettered *Grand Theft Auto IV*, but it's markedly less silly than Volition's finest hour, *Saints Row: The Third*. And rather than falling short of either and feeling like a lesser experience as a result, *Sleeping Dogs* manages to hold its head high and, in such a wonderful gangland/dog metaphor, mark this particular territory as its own.

Players take control of one Wei Shen: Hong Kong-born, now US-based cop heading back to his homeland to infiltrate the local Sun On Yee triads on an undercover basis. It's a setup ripe for more double-crosses and conflicted loyalties than we'd ever expect in a videogame, and the story does its best to keep things spicy

with all manner of... well, double-crosses and conflicted loyalties. If you have a level of intelligence on a par with the traditional house plant, you'll have every single death, screwjob and swerve figured out hours before they happen.

That's not to say it's bad though – and not just because videogame stories are pretty much ass at the best of times. It's very straightforward gangster stuff: turf wars, honour, in-fighting factions, a battle for the leadership. It's also very straightforward and non-daring in how its characters act, speak and generally are. It's hard to think of a single point in the entire game we were surprised – except for the mildly wonderful Winston's mother. Great character, there.

The thing is – and you'll see this as a recurring theme throughout this review – it just doesn't matter that much. Yes, you've seen it all before. But it's a solid gangster story, there's a real conflict inside Wei and by the time you've powered through the 12-15 hours of story missions you get a satisfactory conclusion to affairs.

Then there's the atmosphere on show; never before has a game made us feel as hungry as *Sleeping Dogs* did playing it. This is a city you can *smell*, with the street food

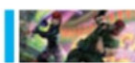
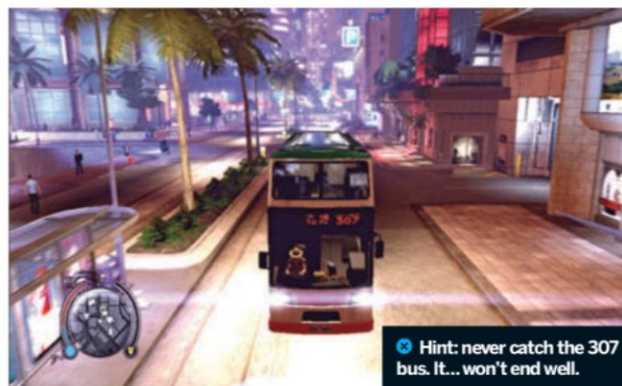


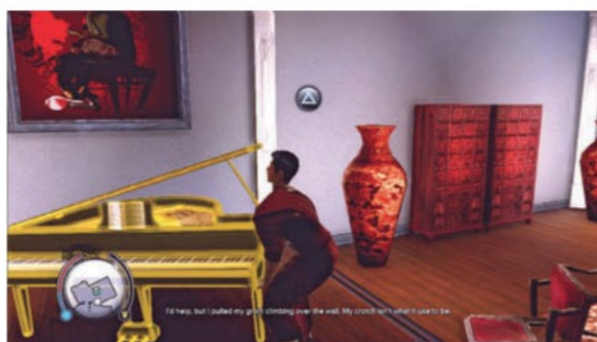
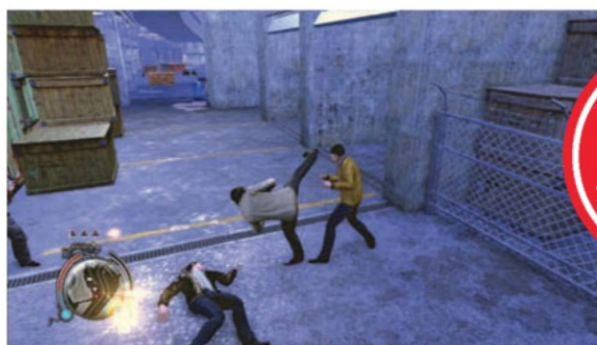
It's rough around the edges, but there's a lot going for it

vendors popping up all over the place offering all manner of treats to partake in. It's muggy and crowded, condensed and overpopulated, then it's airy and bright, free of people and open to nature: it's not an exact replica of Hong Kong, but it's a good scale model. A delicious one, too.

The general experience of playing, though, is of standard sandbox fare with a few modern conveniences you would expect thrown in. Go wherever you want to go, steal all the cars you like, evade the police for as long as possible and then throw in a bit of the now ever-popular free running. The latter aspect is handled nicely, with enough input required from the player to keep it an active participation – unlike something like *Assassin's Creed*, for example, which operates more on a system of aiming your character and just going there. *Sleeping Dogs* requires timely button presses to keep up rhythm and speed. It's not taxing, but it is involving enough to make each of the countless foot chases feel a lot more exciting than they otherwise might. It's a simple, clever touch.

Another of those simple, clever touches comes in the shape of tangible rewards. *Sleeping Dogs* consistently throws players new bits and bobs: new map markers to help locate side-quest items, new clothing items to help dress up Wei as stupidly as you possibly can, new vehicles, new fighting moves and many other elements. It makes hunting down hidden items or completing the plentiful side missions something that actually benefits the player beyond adding to the percentage complete tally.





ECKS PEE!

Forget black and white, ignore yin and yang

EACH MISSION ON *Sleeping Dogs* comes with three forms of XP for the player to earn: triad, police and face. Each brings with it its own levelling system and resultant benefits (more damaging attacks for triad XP, better disarming skills with police, ability to purchase better cars with face) and is earned in ways fitting the background. Run over civilians, lose police XP. Kill someone brutally, gain triad XP. It makes sense, though it can be annoying to see 'property damage' pop up when you only grazed that parking meter. Plus, it avoids the trappings of being a black and white morality system, which is very welcome.



Then there are the stat boosts that come with things like the aforementioned street foods. Have a pork ball, your health will fully recharge for a period (rather than slow, partial recharge when you haven't eaten). Have a green tea, your fortitude will be buffed for a while, meaning you can take more damage. Go for a massage, your level of 'face' will raise quicker for a time. You get the picture.

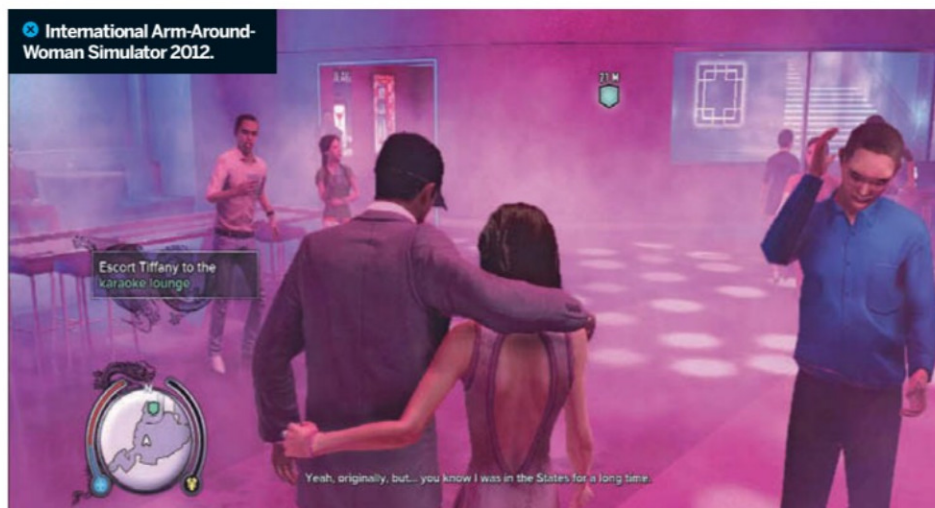
Face is the reputation element that a few things in *Sleeping Dogs* are based around. While initially meant to be a much deeper element back in the long long ago, it now functions more as a limiter for what clothing items you can wear and what cars you can drive. We all know only truly cool people drive *Sleeping Dogs'* equivalent of a Ferrari while wearing suits, after all. It's an interesting

system and a nice visual indicator of the progress you make through the game – from scruffy jeans and a moped to tailored suit and Italian sports car, but it does feel like a bit of a missed opportunity.

Interaction is also limited, it has to be said. This is the sort of game where you'll be pressing triangle to extort, and fast-talking your way out of potentially harmful situations by a timely tap of the very same button. Similarly there are quick-time events that pop up periodically – sometimes taking you unawares – for things as mundane as opening doors, or as necessary as evading arrest (and, brilliantly, flipping the situation so Wei cuffs the cop attempting the capture).

It's not to a level we were lead to believe it would be a couple of years ago when we went





to see the game – back then still called *True Crime* – and it does make a lot of interactions feel pointless. When it's near impossible to fail an encounter, what's the point in having it at all? It doesn't add to the character or storyline for our protagonist to lie to a security guard by saying a dog got loose or a delivery has arrived – it just feels empty. And this goes a bit further into territory that harms the experience a little bit more: there's a lack of real challenge throughout. While we did fail missions and die a handful of times (a quick check of the stats indicates a nice, neat five deaths as a result of fisticuffs), it never feels like *Sleeping Dogs* is pushing the player, especially not in melee combat. Even the few fight clubs that pop up around the map offer little in the way of real challenge, with the game unable to throw enemies with true skill at you, instead trying to overwhelm with numbers. Numbers, that is, that still politely queue up and will never attack in force, instead limiting themselves to a couple of attackers at once.

Never before has a game made us feel as hungry as *Sleeping Dogs* did

But – and here's why it only harms the experience a bit – the fighting system is a lot of fun. Another game to take a leaf from Rocksteady's *Batman* games, *Sleeping Dogs* simply runs with one attack button, a counter, a grapple and a sprint button. It's simple, responsive and as the game progresses adds more complexity at a decent rate. We should point out that the quicker you unlock the wince-inducing limb-breakers, the happier you'll be – few moves in recent games have been as satisfying as these.

The countering system is what makes combat both lack in challenge and high in fun stakes. Enemies glow red when about to strike, you hit the counter button. That's it. You will counter them so long as you don't do anything stupid, like pressing the wrong button. But from that simple tap comes a world of satisfying reversals, leg-snaps, knacker-





❖ The story never strays into truly shocking or intelligent areas, but it's a solid background for the action.



It's Benny, Manager of Club Bam Bam. Old friend of mine. Now he's working for Dogeyes.



❖ Food offers tangible rewards beyond simply restoring health. Also: is delicious.



❖ You will learn to rely on counters as the best way to win every single fight.

FACTUAL MISDEEDS

For someone supposed to be an undercover cop, Wei certainly knows how to get up to some mischief...



CODE-HACKING

He's not just a fist with a face, as Wei can hack all manner of electrical items with his smartphone.



LOCKPICKING

And down a less technological and more breaking-and-entering route, Wei can pick locks with the best of them.



MURDER

Just like any good undercover cop, Wei isn't afraid of killing hundreds of people to maintain his cover.



COP-ARRESTING

When the pressure of being undercover just gets too much, why not try arresting the arresters?



AGGRAVATED BOOT BUNDLING

The funniest element to be added to a game since *Red Dead Redemption* allowed you to tie people to your horse.



KARAOKE

Well this is just too far. Sickening.

punches and neck chops. Combat never gets beyond vaguely trying, but it rarely becomes anything other than fun.

Of course, there's a lot of driving to take part in too. Steal – or buy – your cars and bikes before zipping around Hong Kong, inevitably crashing or ramming the police out of the way with the dedicated ram button (a bit strange, but a good idea). The handling of vehicles is decent, though takes a bit of getting used to, but we found vehicles would consistently brake far too slowly. Maybe we're just bad drivers, who knows? We do, and we're not: it's a loose braking system is all. Not a game-breaker by any means, though.

In fact, there's nothing about *Sleeping Dogs* that really feels like a game-breaker. But at the same time there's nothing that makes it feel like an essential purchase; it feels like a game that will see an inevitable price drop just a few weeks after its release. And you know what? You should definitely snap it up when it hits sub-£20. It's rough around the edges, but there's still a lot going for it.

There's a part of us that absolutely loves *Sleeping Dogs* – it's exactly the kind of game we should see released every year. It's a game you can lose yourself in for dozens of hours, one you can mess about in as much as you like, one that rarely frustrates and offers a fantastic distraction – an escape – from anything else that might be going on. It isn't a brilliant game and there's very little you won't have seen before, but, given a chance, you can have a great deal of fun with *Sleeping Dogs*. You might learn some Cantonese swear words too, which is always handy.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

It's rough around the edges and sometimes insultingly simple, true. But *Sleeping Dogs* is also a game where you have to rescue a cake and can do so in your pants. An imperfect, but, more often than not, fun sandbox romp. Yes, romp.

80%



RELEASE DATE: 31 AUGUST

Tales Of Graces f

The 'f' stands for 'flouncy'. We've decided



DETAILS

Publisher
Namco Bandai
Developer
Namco Tales Studio
Price
£45.95
Players
1-3
Genre
JRPG
Age Rating
12+
Website
www.namcoban-
daigames.com/
console/tales-of-
graces-f
Twitter
@filthierich
Facebook
facebook.com/tales

PS3

Within an hour of turning *Tales Of Graces f* on, we had stolen a slab of pork from a wardrobe and nobody seemed to care. Soon enough we had some kind of pork and rice concoction in our pockets, ready to be devoured should the health of anyone in our party of 11 to 14-year-olds come to too much harm when attacked by an overly aggressive chicken beast (which was being thwacked with our wooden swords). The next few hours went by in such a haze of semi-comforting boredom that we barely even noticed when a (SPOILER) major character met their end and events were set in motion that lead to a 'Seven years later...' caption.

But whatever happened, we were massively grateful you don't have to play all of *Tales Of Graces f* as a child. Because that would suck the proverbial. Yes, you get to take on the world of slightly bigger chicken beasts with swords made of more metal with your party of 18 to 24-year-olds. Phew. And it's quite good fun.

If you're familiar with the *Tales* series, there aren't a huge amount of changes to whet your appetite – that is, if you're looking for changes. If you're not, you'll be fine. If you're not familiar with one of the mainstays of the JRPG genre, then say hello to the 17-year-old *Tales*. We'd

I have so many regrets about who I was seven years ago. I've devoted my life trying to reclaim what was lost, and—

It looks nice, though it does feel a bit empty.



say 'the latest', but it was released in Japan in 2010 and has seen a new game in the franchise released since. Ah, translation.

Anyway, it's pretty much RPG by numbers – mild exploration, world maps, dungeons, cooking, combining, buying new items, looting pork from houses of innocent civilians, listening to tips on how to play the game from dogs (no, really). Then you get to the battle system, and you're shown why the *Tales* series is held in such high regard.

It's real-time, meaning directly controlled action. While initially you will either feel underwhelmed by the paucity of options on offer, or overwhelmed by the ton of eight-second battles lobbed at you, this system will soon become second nature. More complexity

It all comes together in a battle system that you actually want to use

is thrown in as you progress – and you'll get used to things, obviously – and it all comes together in a battle system that you *actually want to use*. Yeah, that's right – a JRPG where you *can* be bothered with the fights. That's the *Tales* way.

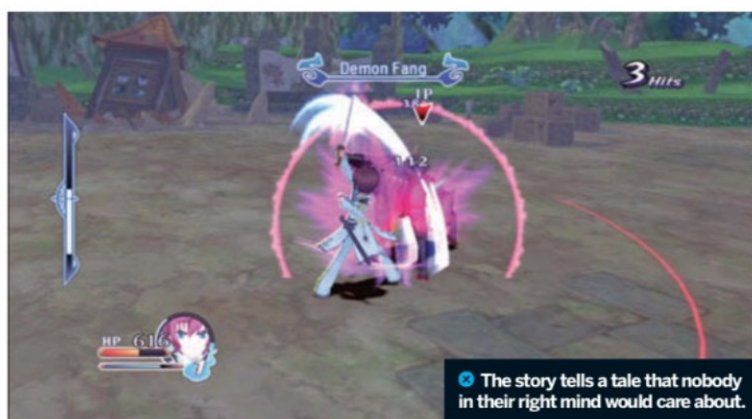
It isn't brilliant – it still feels stilted and clumsy, the story isn't exactly captivating and it drags along at a (dead) snail's pace. But those looking to fill that colourful, anime-styled JRPG hole in their lives could do a lot worse.

Ian Dransfield

VERDICT

Rote it may be in many regards, but an involving, tactical and – most importantly – welcome battle system makes *Tales Of Graces f* stand out from the me-too crowd of JRPGs. Imperfect, and certainly not a game for everyone, but good fun regardless.

77%

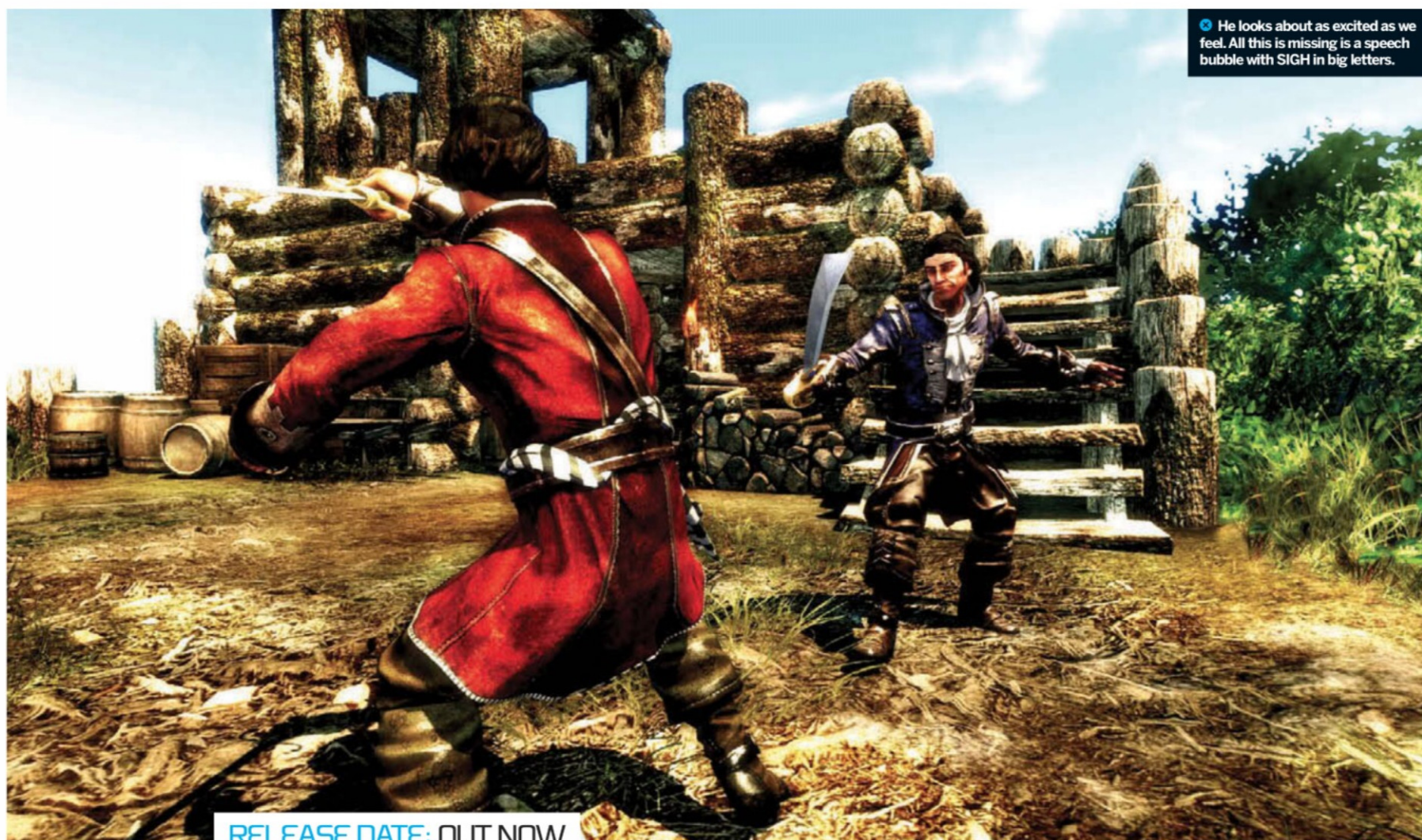


The story tells a tale that nobody in their right mind would care about.



Or you could try

Atelier Meruru: The Apprentice of Arland Issue 221
Hah, only joking. This is balls. 35%



He looks about as excited as we feel. All this is missing is a speech bubble with SIGH in big letters.

RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW



Risen 2: Dark Waters

Pirates of the word-that-means-disappointing-and-rhymes-with-Caribbean



Giant enemy crab! With no real-time weapon change, you're screwed.

DETAILS

Publisher
Deep Silver
Developer
Piranha Bytes
Price
£44.99
Players
1
Genre
RPG
Age Rating
16
Website
risen2.com
Twitter
@RisenOfficial
Facebook
facebook.com/
risengame



Everything you know about pirates is a lie. You think of them as smelly highwaymen of the seven seas, swashbuckling through life with a cutlass in their mouth, a pistol by their side and a strong whiff of grog trailing behind them. Cute image, but you're wrong. Pirates are actually mildly depressed, condemned to a life of fighting monkeys, picking up oysters from the beach and having everyone shout eff off when all they wanted was a little bit of guidance in their directionless, pointless lives.

That's how *Risen 2* depicts them. You play a hollow husk of a man, who begins his adventure by searching for a legendary weapon to kill the kraken by teaming up with Captain Steelbeard. So far, so pirate. Yet this translates to a lot of meaningless NPC dialogue, confused wading through menus trying to work out what to do next, and exploring bland jungle and beach while prodding monkeys and warthogs with your sword. It's the least pirate thing ever made. And, apparently, pirates can't even swim. The screen just fades to black and they respawn on the shore. Rubbish.

It's very, very reminiscent of *Two Worlds*, bearing similar scars of a game that started off with a treasure trove of ambition but had it mercilessly scaled back at some point. Example: *Risen 2* is supposedly an open world game, yet it's so frequently and mercilessly chopped up by funnel-neck design and rigid pathways, it's almost illegal to compare this to something like, say, *Skyrim*. Reason? Even when there's nothing going on in a bland world coloured by pirate vomit, *Risen 2* frequently slaps you on the bum with slowdown spikes,

and this is with the compromise of narrower pathways and the like.

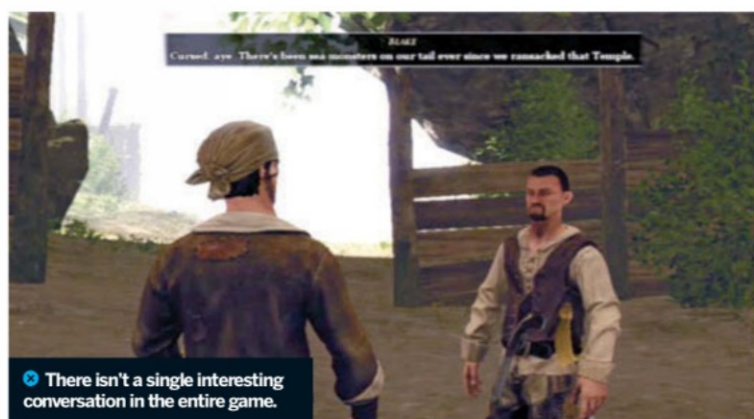
Even so, brave the messy design and you can pick and prod at the best bits of *Risen 2*. It has a lot of depth and gets better as you invest more time in it, allowing the novelty of new skills and abilities to paper over the cracks. There's also a huge RPG hidden away here, with lots of emergent moments – talk to a hooker, walk away and her pimp will later come and 'collect' just for the conversation. Beat him to a pulp and this earns you favour with another character further down the line. Those moments just about make *Risen 2* worth persisting with, as long as you can deal with the harsh reality of how unglamorous a pirate's life really is.

Ryan King

VERDICT

An awkward mish-mash of ideas that struggles to be anything more than promising or intriguing. You could work at it and pick some of the fun elements out of the mess but should games be hard work?

58%



There isn't a single interesting conversation in the entire game.



XBOX 360

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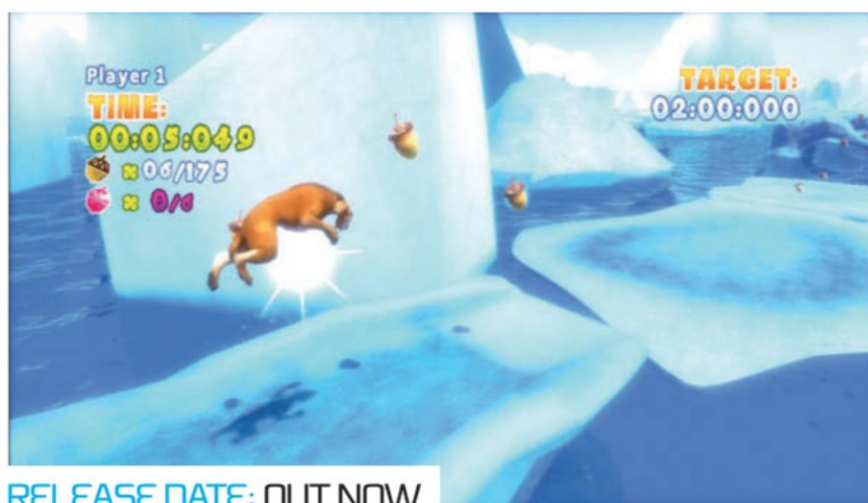


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good newsagents



RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Ice Age 4: Continental Drift: Arctic Games



Ice to see you? Nah



Publisher Activision Developer Blue Sky Price £29.00 Players 1-2 Genre Mini-game Age Rating 3+ Website www.activision.com/atvhub/user/agegate.do Twitter @ATVlassist Facebook facebook.com/IceAge

The first thing to say about *Ice Age 4: Continental Drift: Arctic Games* is that the title has too many colons. The second is that it lies to you. "You can use buttons or Sixaxis!" it cries and yet, pressing buttons results in a fat mammoth standing still on a bit of ice, questioning its life. You *have* to use Sixaxis. You have to wave your pad around to make that fat mammoth move. Any dignity you had left after buying this is soon crushed by *Ice Age 4*'s lies.

Anyway, it's a mini-game compilation, and as expected, none of the included games are going to make players over the age of six minutes old excited. They're not terrible, just boring. There's platforming, racing, a take-off of *Monkey Ball*'s Monkey Target mode, and a game that tasks you with plugging holes in a leaking iceberg. Yeah!

Look, you know the drill: if you've got kids, are a kid, or have the mental age of a kid, you'll find something to like here. Especially in multiplayer, or if you love *Ice Age* so much that your kids are called Scrat and Diego. But for those of you that aren't in the above categories, there's very little to entice you in. There isn't a huge range of events on offer, and most of them become very dull very quickly.

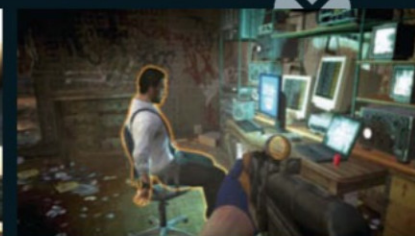
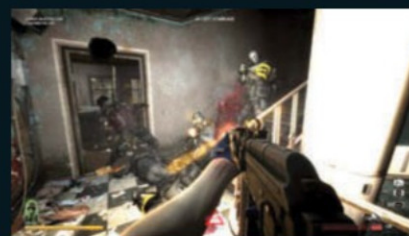
Steve Burns

VERDICT

There are a few laughs to be had here, but the simple fact is that there are better mini-game compilations out there to be had for a fraction of the price. Just watch the movie and play *Monkey Ball*.

40%

PSN reviews



PAYDAY: THE HEIST – WOLFPACK DLC

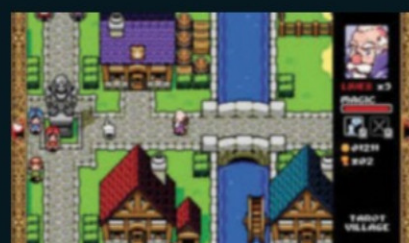
Add two more maps to your wolfpack

Publisher Sony Developer Overkill Entertainment Price £6.49 Players 1-4 Genre FPS



IT'S SAD THAT THE words 'new *Payday* DLC!' mean as much to PS3 owners as 'Big Brother DVD sale!', such is the state of PSN's under-rated *Left 4 Dead* meets cops-n-robbers gem. Sadder still, this DLC is unlikely to change that. A lot of the new toys (grenade launcher, sentry gun) are locked to low level players while the new class, Technician, doesn't provide any sexy new gameplay to draw in those who were on the fence about *Payday*. Instead, *Wolfpack* is pure fan service thanks to its new maps, Counterfeit and Undercover. Counterfeit is standard *Payday* fare but Undercover is brilliant, a multi-layered map in the style of Diamond Heist, and worth the price alone for *Payday* veterans.

75%



WIZORB

It's Breakout meets pixel art meets RPG! Oh

Publisher Tribute Games Developer Tribute Games Price £2.49 Players 1 Genre Puzzle



IF LAZY WRITERS HADN'T described everything with a fraction of colour and personality as 'charming', we'd describe this as 'charming'. So thanks for ruining everything, lazy writers! Sigh. Instead we'll do it the long way. By using simple pixel art and cutesy animations, *Wizarb* is very endearing. It's an easy game to fall in love with. The reason we're going on about the looks so much is the gameplay is essentially *Breakout* – ye olde game of sliding a paddle along the bottom of the screen to bounce a ball at bricks – with some RPG elements massaged in. Nothing particularly new or thrilling but nice enough.

78%



PUDDLE

Don't call it a comeback, I've been here for weeks

Publisher Konami Developer Neko Entertainment Price £5.49 Players 1 Genre Puzzle



"WAIT, PLAY!" YOU CRY, between puffs of your tobacco pipe, stroking your chin as your detective skills kick in. "You've reviewed this before!" Yes, we have. In issue 216 in fact, where we deduced it to be worth of 76 *Play* units of quality out of 100. As impressed as we were with the physics-based puzzler that had you guiding water past obstacles like gaps and fire, it was too difficult and made us feel like idiots. Good news, then. The Vita version has been rebalanced slightly so we feel less like idiots, while the tilt controls actually make this a far more comfortable fit for handheld than it did for pad. So much so that we can recommend this as one of Vita's best puzzle games.

82%



UNLOCK 788 TROPHIES

Need help tracking down every Trophy of the biggest games released this year? We've got them all covered, right here

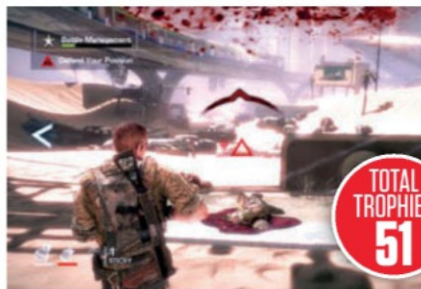


SPEC OPS: THE LINE

DIFFICULTY: EASY



While you can easily get the majority of Trophies from *Spec Ops: The Line* just by playing through the main campaign, that doesn't mean you can do so unaware – check the Trophy list before playing. Remember to aim for those weapon-specific Trophies as you play through the game, and chances are you'll pick up the majority of them. Start the game on Hard, however, otherwise you won't unlock Insane difficulty, which isn't actually much more difficult anyway. Also, remember early on in the game, after rappelling down to the abandoned highway, to shoot one of the wild oryx that appear.



TOTAL
TROPHIES
51

VIRTUA FIGHTER 5

DIFFICULTY: EASY



Most of the Trophies in *VF5* will come just for completing each of the modes. Finish the tutorial, play Score Attack, complete ten tests in Challenge and win all seven battles of Arcade mode to face off against Dural, and the majority will be yours. The trickiest one is '5 Hit Combo', which, unsurprisingly, requires you to score a five-hit combo. To get it, play as a faster character such as Pai, Lau or Eileen and push your opponent into a wall. Once there, alternate between punch and kick attacks while they rebound off the wall. Easy.



TOTAL
TROPHIES
12



Trophies Guide



STARHAWK

DIFFICULTY: VERY EASY

Considering how difficult *Warhawk*'s platinum Trophy was to unlock, *Starhawk* is surprisingly easy. Well, it is if you have two controllers, anyway. Play through the campaign – any difficulty will do – and you'll vacuum up the majority of Trophies in no time. There are other multiplayer Trophies that could prove quite challenging such as the one to shoot a Hawk out of the sky with a tank, but all of these can be boosted in a split-screen match with a second player – or just do it yourself with two controllers. It's pretty much a case of going down the list and ticking them off.



TOTAL TROPHIES 50

GRAVITY RUSH

DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM

Though you'll get a Trophy for completing each mission, most of *Gravity Rush*'s awards won't be collected until later in the game once you've levelled your Kat up to near-maximum. Don't bother with the challenges until then, since you won't be quick enough for gold. Make sure you always spending a good amount of time searching each new area for orbs too, as they're necessary to purchase upgrades. Lastly, there are a number of combat-specific Trophies – try unlocking these on Combat Time Challenges, since you can keep trying again. And for the rare Nevi, remember you can return to the Rift Planes whenever you like.

TOTAL TROPHIES 40



Want some stupidly easy Trophies? Get stuck into *Starhawk* then.

LOLLIPOP CHAINSAW

DIFFICULTY: EASY

You'll unlock most of the Trophies while playing through *Lollipop Chainsaw*, though there are a few things to watch out for. You'll need to complete it on Hard, but the difficulty isn't much more worse than normal. Additionally, you will need to save all of Juliet's classmates. You'll easily spot them during the game, but you'll have to act fast – if they turn into zombies, restart from the checkpoint as you have failed. You'll need to use the Nick Roulette 100 times to unlock 'Love Nick', which will add to the grinding you'll need to do after completing to mop up the remaining kills, collectables and unlocks.



TOTAL TROPHIES 50



LEGO BATMAN 2: DC SUPER HEROES

DIFFICULTY: VERY EASY

As with all *Lego* games, all you really need to do is collect all the red and gold bricks, complete each stage with the required number of studs, save any 'citizens' in each level, and unlock all the characters. That, in itself, is easy enough, but cheat codes can also be used without preventing Trophies from unlocking. To have help finding the red bricks, enter 5KKQ6G into the cheat code screen. To find the gold bricks, enter MBXW7V. To help earn extra studs, enter 74EZUT and MNZER6, with unlockable red brick cheats boosting the number of studs you can earn. The rest of the unlockables just need to be bought from the store.



TOTAL TROPHIES 38



TOTAL TROPHIES 16

THE WALKING DEAD: EPISODES 1 & 2

DIFFICULTY: VERY EASY

The Walking Dead is a great little downloadable game from PSN, but it is in episodes giving you between four and six hours of gameplay between the two of them. As great as it is, however, there's zero difficulty in the Trophies themselves. All you have to do is simply finish the episodes and you'll unlock every Trophy available, regardless of the decisions you make within the game. If you keep it up for the remaining third, fourth and final episodes however then you'll unlock yourself the easiest Platinum available on the PS3. There's nothing else to it, so simply enjoy it.

RESIDENT EVIL: OPERATION RACCOON CITY

DIFFICULTY: HARD



There are many Trophies in *ORC* that are based on cumulative kills and actions, but the main challenge comes from completing everything with an S rank. It'll take a lot of practice to get good enough to S rank everything, but here are the criteria needed to score high: large number of kills, minimal player deaths, high number of items collected and the time taken to finish the mission. Additionally, there are a lot of multiplayer matches that need to be played. The Trophies themselves aren't difficult, but they require a steady group of players – something *ORC* doesn't currently have. Consider hiring friends to help you out in private matches.

TOTAL TROPHIES
51



DIRT: SHOWDOWN

DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM



If you've played a *Dirt* game before, you'll already know you're in for a grind completing every challenge, winning every race, collecting every item and playing a lot online, but there are still a few to watch out for. For 'Zero to Hero', avoid dominating every sector of a race until the very last lap, where you'll need to go hell for leather to make sure you take control of every sector. 'Comeback King' means you should linger in last place during a Rampage event until the last 30 seconds, where you'll need to wreck cars quickly to come out on top. Lastly, don't forget to both send and accept a challenge from a friend for two extra Trophies.

TOTAL TROPHIES
50



TOTAL TROPHIES
50

BINARY DOMAIN

DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM



Binary Domain's Trophies are a mixed bunch, most unlocking as you play through. There are a few missable Trophies bundled in with the rest of the automatically unlocking story Trophies – make sure you give them a look so you know when to act on the necessary boss fights or missions. There's also a Trophy for each of the characters you can have in your party, so make sure you regularly switch them out to build up their loyalty to maximum. There's a bunch of multiplayer ones too, but due to the limited numbers of players this is another one where you'll need to call in the assistance of friends if you want the remaining Trophies.



MAX PAYNE 3

DIFFICULTY: VERY HARD



If you have the time and inclination, *Max Payne 3* could easily be the most rewarding Platinum

on your Trophy list. You'll need to complete two playthroughs of the game, both on Hard and Hardcore difficulty, unlock and complete New York Minute on Normal and Hardcore, and find every collectable in the game. This will require a detailed knowledge of each level and a lot of practice, not to mention dealing with the challenge of the game either. Then there's multiplayer, which will take many, many hours of play before you've reached the maximum level of 50. It's a difficult one, so only try if you consider yourself a dab hand at shooters.

TOTAL TROPHIES
43



ASURA'S WRATH

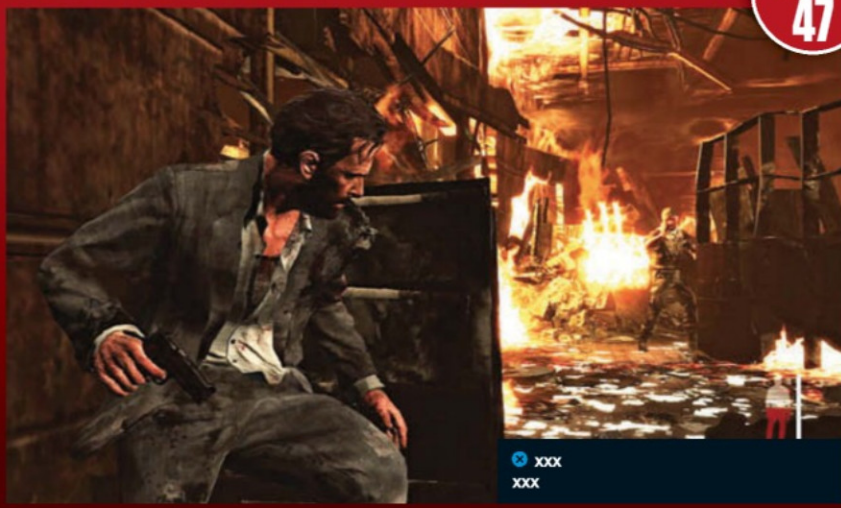
DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM



Another game that'll need you to earn S rank on all of its levels. This time, however, you'll need to do it both on Normal and Hard difficulty. To earn S rank you should concentrate on finishing the level fast and avoiding dying, since this will cost you 1,000 Battle Points. Another Trophy, 'Ka-Ching!', requires you to earn 120,000 Battle Points, which you should get in the pursuit of the top rank. If you don't, replay your lowest-scoring episodes. Lastly, in the hot spring episode, drink a lot of alcohol, ogle the spring attendant's boobs and find the Doji hidden on the left side of the screen.



TOTAL TROPHIES
47





GHOST RECON FUTURE SOLDIER

DIFFICULTY: HARD



You're going to need friends to help you here, because Elite Campaign and reaching wave 50 in Guerrilla mode will be extremely difficult solo. Guerrilla mode has a few to look out for, however: using an airstrike on five enemies and infiltrating the first area without being detected, which are pretty self-explanatory. Beyond that you'll have a lot of multiplayer to play through, so ensure you're in squads that win each particular game type as well, and have a friend send you Daily Challenges to complete. As you play online, make sure you keep unlocking attachments – even if you don't use them, since you'll need 50 for another Trophy.

TOTAL TROPHIES
51

PROTOTYPE 2

DIFFICULTY: EASY



Most of *Prototype 2*'s Trophies revolve around completing the game and using specific abilities a certain number of times. You will need to complete the game on Hard, but even that won't be much of a challenge. One of the trickier Trophies is 'Strike, You're Out' – grab a helicopter, cause some damage, and when you see 'Strike Team Inbound', concentrate on the enemy chopper. Do this on the first island so only one helicopter shows up; complete it in 15 seconds and the Trophy is yours. For 'So Above It All' climb the highest building on the third island then leap off. You'll need maximum upgrades to stay aloft for the full 25 seconds.



TOTAL TROPHIES
44

DRAGON'S DOGMA

DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM



Most of the Trophies in *Dragon's Dogma* are fairly simple, requiring you to mop up quests and kills as you play. It'll take a good few hours to unlock the majority of Trophies, so make sure you're aware of what needs doing and work towards them as you play. The cash and kills Trophies will appear naturally, but ensure you complete every quest you find. Once you've reached the end game, you'll need to take on the Ur-Dragon. There are two options here: fight it online and hope it spawns with zero health and just destroy its weak spots, or fight it when disconnected from the internet. Still a tough one though.



TOTAL TROPHIES
51

SILENT HILL: DOWNPOUR

DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM



You're going to need at least two playthroughs, so you might as well do your Hard game/puzzle playthroughs first. The only other Trophies of particular note are the five different endings; luckily, they can be collected in pairs if you're clever with your saves. Ending B and ending D require you to make only bad decisions, while killing as many monsters as possible.

Save just before you encounter Cunningham at the end, deciding first to kill her and then reload and spare her. The same goes for Ending A and ending C, only you should make good decisions and avoid killing monsters. Last is 'Good Behaviour', which requires you to play through the game without killing a monster.



TOTAL TROPHIES
42

MASS EFFECT 3

DIFFICULTY: HARD



If you tried to get *Mass Effect 2*'s Platinum Trophy, then you already know most of what is required here. If you have an existing save, you'll only need to complete it once providing you play on Insanity, otherwise it's twice at least. There are a number of missable Trophies too, so make sure you read the descriptions, complete every side mission and romance a teammate to unlock each of these. You'll still need to level your character up to 60, however, but if you prefer you can play multiplayer to level 20 instead. It's a surprisingly fun mode, but without friends to help you, surviving Gold can be difficult.



TOTAL TROPHIES
51



TOTAL TROPHIES
51

RIDGE RACER UNBOUNDED

DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM



Thanks to the track creator, *Ridge Racer Unbounded*'s trickier Trophies can easily be collected by playing a user-created track that you can make to help you unlock these. Some Trophies that are best earned this way are 'Litterbug', 'Creative Destruction' and 'Award Hogger', though pretty much any you're struggling with can be earned this way. Unfortunately, there are still a few multiplayer ones that might prove a little difficult to manage: 'Best In The World', 'Fragging Ball' and 'Boost Scrooge' all have an element of luck to unlocking them online, the only solution being persistence or bringing along seven friends to help you out.



THE

CHEAPEST GAMES ON PLAYSTATION 3

Ignoring quality, ignoring secondhand, ignoring our better judgement: just what are the absolute cheapest games on PS3?



02 SHAUN WHITE SKATEBOARDING

DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL
RRP: £49.99



Pay a bit more money to stick with the tried-and-tested *Tony Hawk's* franchise. That is to say, just buy *Tony Hawk's 3* on PS2 if you have a BC console or PSONe if you don't, as it's still the best skating game out there that isn't *Skate 3*. Don't put your money, even if it is just £4, into this idiotic crap – a game in which 'fighting the man' is a case of slapping up adverts for clothing brands across a city. Stupid, stupid, stupid.



1 THE X FACTOR

DEVELOPER: DEEP SILVER
RRP: £34.99



If you live in a world where you simply cannot afford *SingStar*, ever, and you don't actually care if you play a no good hack-job that apes said karaoke game within an inch of its life but also does it really badly, then *The X Factor* is the game for you. It seems there's a very good reason this is one of the cheapest games on PS3: it's absolutely, unbearably bad. Not even worth three and a half quid.

PLAY.COM
MOVIES MUSIC GAMES
£3.59

03 TV SUPERSTARS

DEVELOPER: SCE CAMBRIDGE
RRP: £29.99



Are you the kind of person who has these 'friends' we hear so much about? 'Friends' that aren't much in the way of gamers, but aren't averse to prattling about in front of the telly in order to have what scientists call 'fun'? Well, then for just two Queen coins (not the band) you can have this game where you do stupid party crap to pass the time before you die! Bliss! It ain't great, but for £2 it almost is.



GAME
£1.99



4 PES 2009

DEVELOPER: KONAMI
RRP: £49.99



We were surprised we didn't find more sports games at the super-cheap end of the spectrum – there were a few, though, and *PES 2009* was the cheapest. It's not the best entry in the series. In fact, it's only marginally better than *PES 2008*, and that one was rubbish. But two quid for a perfectly serviceable football game? Yeah, why not. Just don't try to play it online – nobody else does anyway, and if they did it would be laggeddon.

PLAY.COM
MOVIES MUSIC GAMES
£1.97

10 Cheapest PS3 Games



5 BAND HERO

DEVELOPER: NEVERSOFT
RRP: £49.99



Remember when music games came out pretty much every day? Well *Band Hero* was one of those releases and, seeing as it was lost in the mix somewhat, it is half-remembered as being forgettable by many. But it's actually surprisingly good – sanitised and 'accessible' so the whole family can play it, but three pounds for something everyone can play together if you have the instruments? That sounds like nothing other than a good thing.

GameCollection
£2.95



06 DISNEY SING IT: HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL 3: SENIOR YEAR

DEVELOPER: ZOE MODE
RRP: £29.99



Officially holding the title of Cheapest New Game We Could Find For PS3 – it's a catchy name, no doubt – is this tie-in with those Disney films you either love, because you're of the right age, or you just don't get and only know through the pastiche of them on *South Park*. Guess which area we fit in. Anyway, it's another singing game and you know what? It's not that bad. Definitely worth it at this price if you have *HSM* fans likely to visit.

PLAY.COM
MOVIES MUSIC GAMES
£1.39



7 SEGA SUPERSTARS TENNIS

DEVELOPER: SUMO DIGITAL
RRP: £44.99



It's not the best tennis game out there by a long shot, but it's by no means the worst. For less than four of your British earth punts you can bag another serviceable sports game, this time from everybody's favourite Steel City developer, Sumo Digital. But it's another one where even going near online would be a huge, stupid mistake, because nobody even played it online when it came out in 2008.



GAME
£1.99

08 KUNG FU RIDER

DEVELOPER: SONY JAPAN STUDIO
RRP: £29.99



Hey, guys! Remember when *Move* was about to come out and it would change gaming forever and we saw a game supporting the control system where you rode an office chair and it looked like wacky fun from Planet Wackington then we played it and found it to be boring, irritating and inaccurate? Yeah, that. At the same time, it's less than it costs for a pint of burgers, or whatever it is you mortals purchase with your 'money'. Half-recommended.



PLAY.COM
MOVIES MUSIC GAMES
£2.49

09 TRUTH OR LIES

DEVELOPER: THQ
RRP: £24.99



Two pounds and forty nine pence for your very own lie detector test, able to tell whether or not somebody speaking into the microphone to answer a set question is unleashing truth nuggets or lie... nuggets? Sign us up. Well, don't, because it's rubbish nonsense that doesn't work at all. But hey – if you have gullible, stupid, idiotic friends then you can convince them it really does work and make them answer compromising questions. Success!



GAME
£2.99

10 ALIENS VS PREDATOR

DEVELOPER: REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS
RRP: £49.99



This is probably the best of the bunch, all things considered. There's still a tiny, tiny online community supporting the surprisingly fun multiplayer, and the single-player, while we weren't blown away by it, does have some interesting ideas and offers enough that's different from the usual fare to keep you playing. Plus there's the whole 'three quid' factor, which makes this almost essential. For the price, at least. Just don't expect a world-beater and you'll be happy enough.



SPECIAL MENTION UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

HOW MUCH: £2.99
WHERE FROM:

Game.co.uk/GameStation.co.uk Getting a special mention seeing as it wasn't available anywhere we actually saw it listed is *Uncharted 2*. Yes, the 96%-scoring *Uncharted 2*. Possibly the best game on PS3. A personal favourite of countless gamers. Inarguably one of the most well-made games ever committed to disc, cartridge, tape, PCB or whatever else games come on. Problem is, you can't actually seem to get it for this price. Shame, as it would be bargain of the century otherwise.

TOP TEN PSN RETRO



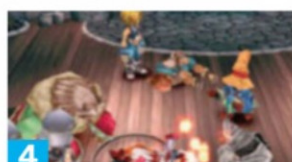
1 Metal Gear Solid



2 Resident Evil 2



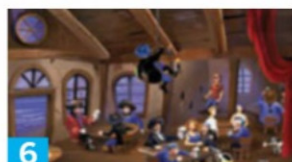
3 God Hand



4 Final Fantasy IX



5 Streets Of Rage 2



6 The Secret Of Monkey Island



7 Driver



8 Final Fight: Double Impact



9 Sonic The Hedgehog 2



10 Crash Bandicoot

RETRO ON PSN... They're old but are they any good?

It doesn't look thrilling, true, but it's absolutely captivating.



Harvest Moon: Back To Nature



• Release date January 2001/February 2011 (PSN) • Publisher Marvelous Interactive • Developer Natsume
• Games it influenced *Catherine*, *Tokyo Jungle*, *Yakuza* series

IT'S A GAME ABOUT farming. No, really. Remember that episode of *The Simpsons* where

Marge chides the children for not taking care of the chores, including gardening, but later when Bart and Lisa encounter a 'virtual farming' videogame at a local fair they can't wait to play? Yeah, that. But keep the laughter firmly with our favourite cartoon family, because it's certainly not chucklesome how much fun *Harvest Moon* still is.

You take care of a dilapidated farm; something still unlike any other game that springs to mind. Clear out your arable land, till the soil, plant and water the seeds, tend to the crops, sell, cook or give away the produce. Simple, straightforward, but lightly strategic and utterly captivating. Seriously, that first crop of sweet potatoes is one you'll never forget. (Clue: grow sweet potatoes when you can because they're worth a lot.)

But it doesn't stop there – this is 'life simulation', whatever that means, meaning you take part in other seemingly mundane activities like attending cook-offs, taking your dog for a walk and fishing. It's like if *Yakuza* had no violence in it, in a vague way. Really, it is.

And then you have your courting. Ah, wooing the ladies, winning their hearts, making them love you. Basically aiming for Karen, because she's a drunkard, and that means she's a girl after *Play*'s collective heart. Yes, folks, there's even a dating simulator crammed in there, and while it isn't exactly as painfully spot-on as something

like *Catherine*, there's definitely a feeling consistent across the two. Though you're only likely to shear your sheep in *Harvest Moon*, and not run away from them while half-naked and being chased by some monstrous nightmare baby thing. Oh, God, what even was *Catherine*?

Currently *Back To Nature* is only available on the US store, even though the game did get an EU release back at the turn of the century. We're not entirely sure who to pester to get it released on the European store, so for the time being you'll have to rely on having a US account, or just picking up a secondhand copy and going from there. That way's not cheap, as it's relatively rare.

But you know what? In this current age of endless shooting and an obsession with getting the shade of gunmetal grey just right on your gun, it might be worth that bit of extra effort to play something that's just made to be twee, cutesy and relaxing. Though admittedly it can be a bit tense if you arrive back to the farm late and you forgot to put the chickens indoors, or if you put your cow outside in a storm. Ooh, it gets hairy when you do that.

WHAT WE SAID: Issue 74 • 80%

"If the thought of repetitiously clearing, tilling, and planting upon the land physically sickens you, then *Harvest Moon* will be a royal waste of cash – its straight playing of the cute card alone will fool many into overlooking what is one of the more complex and demanding titles we've seen for quite a while."

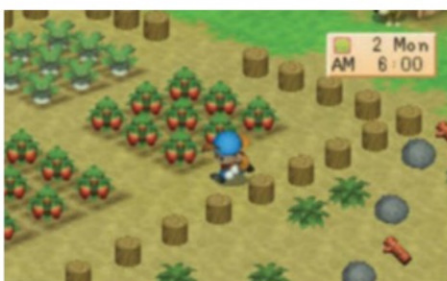
Ah, the age before everything was design-by-committee. Better days.



You get a Trophy-unlocked-style pang of glee when selling crops. Sigh.



Look after your chickens.



NEVER COMING TO PSN #9

Blam! Machinehead



- Release October 1996
- Developer Lobotomy Software

THE EARLY DAYS of PlayStation were an interesting time. If you were there, you remember it: things were weird and wobbly, it was hard to classify games like *Blam! Machinehead* as first-person shooters even though they were; draw distance was the stuff of a madman's dreams of a future we could never imagine; and those in charge of naming games employed a less than judicious use of the exclamation mark.

For all these reasons – and because it's a bit anti-good by today's standards, even as a curio – we're unlikely to be seeing *Blam! Machinehead* any time soon on PSN. Oh, 1996, you were such a strange time for games. We remember your inability to draw detailed terrain – or anything apart from darkness, come to think of it – beyond a distance of about five metres. And you know what? It's comforting. It's warm. It's a technical limitation that conjures up a huge amount of delicious nostalgia. Oh yeah, and the draw distance in *Blam! Machinehead* is terrible. Nice save.



WE COULD HAVE DONE WITHOUT



❌ We have not doctored these shots. It just looks crap.

C: The Contra Adventure



WE'VE JUST READ back over our review of this US-only PSone release (49%, Play 42) and were surprised to find that

our reviewer at the time didn't seem to like the game. Well, that's not surprising as *C: The Contra Adventure* is one of the worst games we can think of. It's awful.

But the really surprising part is our intrepid reporter didn't seem to like *any* *Contra* games. See, that's just wrong. *Contra* is an excellent series and, after

this absolute abomination of a game, it got back on track for the PS2 era. But that doesn't change the fact that this... this... *thing* still exists.

It's like a side-scrolling shooter, were it made by your idiotic little brother. It's like somebody in a boardroom somewhere provided a vague, mostly incorrect description of a quarter of a level from the original game and demanded that a person who had never coded anything in their life to go and make the game based on said description. It's like a really bad game, you could say.

PS2 CLASSICS REVIEW - NEO CONTRA



N.B. Not a game about The Matrix's hero fighting in Central America



SOMETIMES IT'S BEST to just quote Wikipedia verbatim: "*Neo Contra* takes place during AD 4444 when the Earth has been transformed into a prison planet, home to criminals and political rebels."

Wait, you still need to know more? Oh, all right.

We're on a bit of a *Contra* binge, hence featuring it here on these pages twice. On one hand you have the prolapse of a game that is *C: The Contra Adventure*, on the other you have the wilful insanity of *Neo Contra*, a far better take on the traditional *Contra* formula that sees a clone of the original game's Bill Rizer team up with an alien samurai to fight a talking dog and a plant cyborg. Oh, and there's a level where both players are running on a helicopter's rotor blades. You know that point when you remember how great videogames were before the rot of inanity set in?

Yeah, that. From a critical perspective, *Neo Contra* isn't the best in the series – it's not *Contra III* on the SNES, for a start – but it's still a damn good laugh and worth the PSN pennies.

RETRO GAMES WE SAID WE WANT TO PLAY AGAIN BUT PROBABLY WON'T



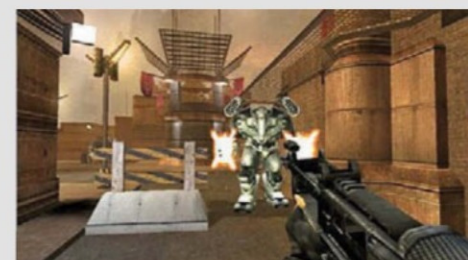
Defcon 5

We played this when we were kids. We didn't understand it. We intended to go back to it and play it some more, this time with a better understanding of it. Then we couldn't be bothered and did something else instead.



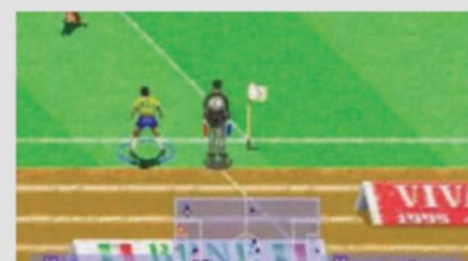
WWF WrestleMania: The Arcade Game

Much as we complain the SmackDown series is in a bit of a funk, it's infinitely preferable to this mid-Nineties nonsense in which The Undertaker literally battered his opponents with a tombstone. Subtlety, thy name was not Midway.



Red Faction 2

Every now and then the *Red Faction* urge hits and we have to blow stuff up and shout about miners and stuff. Then we remember how shoddy *RF2* was in comparison to the original – and third, but not fourth – and we laugh.



International Superstar Soccer Deluxe

You know what? It's still fun. It's still worth playing, in a 'This is a basic, old football game' way. But it's also resolutely a game from the 16-bit generation and we will never understand why it came to PSone. So we won't play it. Out of spite.

PLAY# PlayList

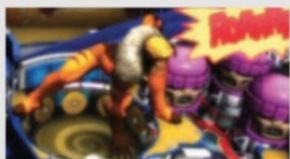
If you want to know what a game scored then these pages are for you

TEAM PICKS TOP FIVE PS+ FREEBIES



top five RYAN KING

- 1 Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown
- 2 Back To The Future
- 3 Deus Ex: Human Revolution
- 4 Silent Hill
- 5 Velocity



top five IAN DRANSFIELD

- 1 Velocity
- 2 Deus Ex: Human Revolution
- 3 Marvel Pinball
- 4 Silent Hill
- 5 Darksiders



top five STEVE BURNS

- 1 Silent Hill
- 2 Warhammer 40,000
- 3 Velocity
- 4 Darksiders
- 5 Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath



top five ANDY SALTER

- 1 Deus Ex: Human Revolution
- 2 Silent Hill
- 3 Darksiders
- 4 Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown
- 5 Velocity

PS3 LISTING



game	issue	score
3D Collection	195	75%
3D Dot Game Heroes	192	87%
50 Cent: Blood On The Sand	177	70%
Ace Combat: Assault Horizon	211	78%
The Adventures Of Tintin	212	58%
Afro Samurai	177	61%
Agarest: Generations Of War	187	78%
Agarest: Generations Of War Zero	209	52%
Air Conflicts: Secret Wars	208	58%
Alice: Madness Returns	207	57%
Aliens vs Predator	189	79%
Alone In The Dark	173	70%
Alpha Protocol	193	83%
Ape Escape	208	55%
Arcana Heart 3	207	79%
Armored Core For Answer	173	65%
Armored Core 4	153	67%
Armored Core V	217	60%
Army Of Two	164	80%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	188	65%
Ar Tonelico Qoga: Knell Of Ar Ciel	203	27%
Ashes Cricket 2009	183	30%
Assassin's Creed	161	58%
Assassin's Creed II	186	89%
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	199	91%
More than enough additions to take the Assassin's Creed formula into modern classic territory.		
Assassin's Creed Revelations	212	75%
Asura's Wrath	216	67%
Atelier Rorona: The Alchemist Of Arland	198	77%
Backbreaker	193	70%
Band Hero	187	68%
Batman: Arkham Asylum	183	85%
Batman: Arkham City	211	94%
Rocksteady's sequel to the excellent Arkham Asylum is a serious contender for game of the year.		
Battle Fantasia	176	67%
Battlefield: Bad Company	168	78%
Battlefield: Bad Company 2	190	93%
Single-player is fairly impressive but take it online and it's bordering on genius. This is quite possibly the best shooter on PS3 today.		
Battlefield 3	212	88%
Battleship	219	44%
Bayonetta*	187	93%
The Beatles: Rock Band	184	96%
Beijing 2008	168	54%
Beowulf	161	61%
Binary Domain	216	70%
Bionic Commando	179	82%
BioShock	172	93%
BioShock 2	189	88%
Birds Of Steel	217	55%
BlackSite	163	43%
Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War	160	58%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger	190	85%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift	198	94%
Blazing Angels	151	54%
Bleach: Soul Resurrección	209	63%
Blitz: The League II	172	67%
Blur	193	86%
Bodycount	210	54%
Borderlands	185	80%
The Bourne Conspiracy	168	72%
Brink	206	67%
Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway	171	75%
Brütal Legend	185	79%
Bulletstorm	203	86%

game	issue	score
Burnout Paradise	162	74%
Buzz!: Quiz TV	168	82%
Buzz!: Quiz World	185	70%
Call Of Duty 3	151	77%
Call Of Duty: World At War	173	68%
Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	160	88%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2	186	94%
Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	212	88%
Call Of Duty: Black Ops	199	94%
Treyarch's first genuinely brilliant entry to the series and a standard-bearer for fast-paced online shooters.		
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	181	85%
Call Of Juarez: The Cartel	208	30%
Captain America: Super Soldier	208	70%
Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow	197	85%
Carnival Island	213	53%
Cars 2	208	68%
Catherine	215	61%
Champion Jockey	210	50%
Chronicles Of Riddick: Assault On Dark Athena	178	87%
Child Of Eden	211	80%
Civilization Revolution	168	90%
Clash Of The Titans	193	65%
Clive Barker's Jericho	159	84%
The Club	163	80%
Colin McRae: DiRT	158	91%
Colin McRae: DiRT 2	184	87%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	178	65%
Conan	160	71%
Condemned 2	165	78%
Conflict: Denied Ops	164	50%
Crash Time 4: The Syndicate	218	37%
Create	199	71%
Cross Edge	182	59%
Crysis 2	204	72%
The Cursed Crusade	211	40%
Damnation	181	38%
Dance Dance Revolution	201	52%
Dante's Inferno	189	80%
The Darkness	154	91%
The Darkness II	215	76%
Dark Sector	165	62%
Dark Souls	211	90%
Sequel to one of the hardest games in recent times, Dark Souls is another superb release from developer From Software.		
Dark Void	188	81%
Darksiders	188	83%
Darksiders II	221	86%
DC Universe Online	202	80%
de Blob 2	203	65%
Dead Island	210	79%
Dead Rising 2	197	78%
Dead Rising 2: Off The Record	211	61%
Dead Space	172	87%
Dead Space 2	201	92%
The point where the Dead Space series stepped up and became something to be genuinely excited about.		
Dead To Rights: Retribution	192	68%
Def Jam: Icon	151	79%
Def Jam Rapstar	199	72%
Demon's Souls	193	92%
Destroy All Humans: Path Of The Furon	178	29%
Deus Ex: Human Revolution	209	91%
Worries: unfounded. Fun: lots of it. True Deus Ex experience: confirmed. Boss battles: bloody awful.		
Devil May Cry 4	163	89%
Devil May Cry HD Collection	217	80%
DiRT 3	206	85%
DiRT Showdown	219	84%
Disgaea 3: Absence Of Justice	175	81%
DJ Hero	186	91%
DJ Hero 2	198	88%
Doctor Who: The Eternity Clock	220	32%
Dragon Age: Origins	186	82%

game	issue	score
Dragon Age II	203	86%
Dragon Ball: Raging Blast	186	40%
Dragon Ball Z: Burst Limit	168	61%
Dragon's Dogma	218	48%
Driver: San Francisco	209	68%
Duke Nukem Forever	207	33%
Dungeon Siege III	206	80%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam	160	40%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 2	176	43%
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 3	208	56%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	189	37%
Dynasty Warriors 6	164	30%
Dynasty Warriors 6: Empires	181	44%
Dynasty Warriors 7	204	32%
EA Sports Active 2	200	81%
EA Sports Grand Slam Tennis	215	75%
EA Sports MMA	198	89%
Eat Lead	178	38%
EDF: Insect Armageddon	208	64%
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion	152	91%
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim	212	93%
WARNING: The latest addition to Bethesda's superb franchise will seriously damage your social life.		
El Shaddai: Ascension Of The Metatron	208	77%
Enchanted Arms	152	69%
Enemy Territory: Quake Wars	168	60%
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West	197	83%
Eternal Sonata	176	87%
Everybody's Golf 5*	158	88%
Everybody's Golf: World Tour	165	91%
Eye Of Judgment	159	65%
EyePet	185	83%
EyePet: Move	197	84%
F1 2010	197	86%
F1 2011	211	71%
FaceBreaker	170	55%
Fairytale Fights	186	51%
Fallout 3	173	97%
Fallout 3 lives up to its promise and then some. It's a damning portrayal of the consequences of war, and a compelling RPG experience.		
Fallout: New Vegas	198	88%
Fantastic Four: Rise Of The Silver Surfer	155	39%
Far Cry 2	172	74%
F.E.A.R.	151	81%
F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin	176	87%
F.E.A.R. 3	208	60%
FIFA 08	159	84%
FIFA 09	171	87%
FIFA 10	184	90%
FIFA 11	197	91%
FIFA 12	210	86%
FIFA Street (2012)	217	74%
FIFA Street 3	163	66%
FIFA World Cup 2010	192	70%
The Fight	199	42%
Fight Night Champion	203	88%
Fight Night Round 3	151	87%
Fight Night Round 4	181	84%
Final Fantasy XIII	190	85%
Final Fantasy XIII-2	214	80%
Fist Of The North Star: Ken's Rage	198	51%
Folklore	158	66%
Formula One Championship Edition	151	72%
Fracture	171	72%
Front Mission Evolved	198	52%
Fuel	180	49%
Full Auto 2: Battlegrounds	151	69%
G-Force	183	59%
Game Of Thrones	220	39%
Genji: Days Of The Blade	151	38%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	83%
Ghost Recon Future Soldier	219	60%
Ghostbusters: The Videogame	180	80%
GI Joe	183	22%
The Godfather	151	37%
The Godfather II	178	38%

This month's new entries

The newest games, freshly squeezed among all your old favourites

Darksiders II PS3	86%	Atelier Merurur: The Apprentice Of Arland PSN	35%
Lego Batman 2 PS3	80%	Frogger: Hyper Arcade Edition PSN	55%
Lollipop Chainsaw PS3	72%	Quantum Conundrum PSN	90%
London 2012 PS3	45%	Rainbow Moon PSN	68%
Ratchet & Clank Trilogy HD PS3	88%	Resident Evil Chronicles HD Collection PSN	82%
Test Drive		The Walking Dead Episode 2 PSN	90%
Ferrari Racing Legends PS3	60%		
The Amazing Spider-Man PS3	61%		
MGS HD Collection PSV	70%		

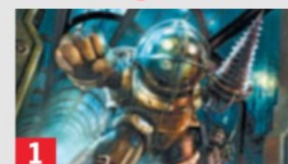
game	issue	score
God Of War III	190	88%
God Of War Collection*	188	93%
Two of the greatest PS2 action games of all time come together at a bargain price. Essential purchase.		
God Of War Collection: Volume II	210	70%
The Golden Compass	162	32%
GoldenEye 007: Reloaded	213	63%
Gran Turismo 5	200	85%
Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	165	75%
Grand Theft Auto IV	166	98%
Green Day: Rock Band	194	77%
GTA: Episodes From Liberty City	191	94%
Guitar Hero III	160	90%
Guitar Hero III is another great rhythm-action beast, sure to delight fans and newcomers alike. So, grab a guitar and rock out!		
Guitar Hero 5	184	81%
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	168	63%
Guitar Hero Greatest Hits	182	76%
Guitar Hero Metallica	179	88%
Guitar Hero: Van Halen	189	65%
Guitar Hero: Warriors Of Rock	197	71%
Guitar Hero World Tour	173	95%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 1	200	21%
Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 2	208	37%
Harry Potter And The Half-Blood Prince	182	60%
Harry Potter And The Order Of The Phoenix	155	32%
Haze	167	64%
Heavenly Sword	157	71%
Heavy Rain	189	94%
Heavy Rain: Move Edition	198	70%
Heroes Over Europe	184	48%
Homefront	203	69%
The House Of The Dead: Overkill	212	75%
Hunted: The Demon's Forge	207	59%
Hyperdimension Neptunia	202	21%
Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs	182	47%
Ico & Shadow Of The Colossus Classics HD	210	94%
Largely ignored when they were first released, gamers can now enjoy these wonderful games in brilliant HD.		
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	183	72%
The Incredible Hulk	168	52%
inFamous	180	81%
inFamous 2	207	83%
International Cricket 2010	194	61%
Inversion	220	49%
Iron Man	166	58%
Iron Man 2	193	50%
The Jak And Daxter Trilogy	216	82%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	199	63%
James Cameron's Avatar: The Game	187	64%
JASF: Jane's Advanced Strike Fighters	217	30%
John Daly's ProStroke Golf	197	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	159	78%
Just Cause 2	190	87%
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	160	73%
Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days	196	71%
Katamari Forever	184	88%
Killzone 2	176	93%
Killzone 3	202	80%
Kingdoms Of Amalur: Reckoning	215	70%
The King Of Fighters XII	182	82%
The King Of Fighters XIII	213	76%
Knights Contract	202	53%
Kung Fu Panda 2	207	20%
Kung Fu Rider	196	65%
Lair	158	52%
L.A. Noire	206	91%
Not perfect but Rockstar's new IP introduces pioneering facial-capture technology and interesting gameplay.		
Last Rebellion	191	42%
Legend Of Spyro: Dawn Of The Dragon	174	54%
Legendary	173	62%
Lego Batman	173	65%

game	issue	score
Lego Batman 2	221	80%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4	194	79%
Lego Harry Potter: Years 5-7	213	67%
Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	167	73%
Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues	187	71%
Lego Pirates Of The Caribbean	206	76%
Lego Rock Band	187	75%
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	160	76%
Lego Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	204	79%
Leisure Suit Larry: Box Office Bust	180	24%
LittleBigPlanet	172	94%
LittleBigPlanet 2	201	96%
An amazing game and something to get involved with even if you can't create your own stuff.		
Lollipop Chainsaw	221	72%
London 2012	221	45%
The Lord Of The Rings: Aragorn's Quest	199	60%
The Lord Of The Rings: Conquest	175	52%
The Lord Of The Rings: War In The North	213	42%
Lost Planet 2	192	75%
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	163	69%
Lost: The Video Game	164	38%
Madden NFL 07	151	82%
Madden NFL 08	157	82%
Madden NFL 09	170	83%
Madden NFL 10	184	82%
Madden NFL 11	196	84%
Madden NFL 12	209	85%
Mafia II	196	81%
MAG	189	68%
Majin And The Forsaken Kingdom	199	72%
Marvel vs Capcom 3	202	88%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance	151	64%
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	185	57%
Max Payne 3	219	77%
Mass Effect 2	201	97%
Mass Effect 3	216	93%
Despite having arguably one of the worst endings in videogame history, this is still a must for any serious videogame collection.		
Medal Of Honor	198	86%
Medal Of Honor Airborne	161	85%
Medieval Moves	213	47%
Mercenaries 2: World In Flames	171	78%
Metal Gear Solid 4	167	92%
Not the final Metal Gear Solid game after all then. Still brilliant though, and still largely incomprehensible.		
Metal Gear Solid HD Collection	214	91%
Mobile Suit Gundam: Crossfire	151	37%
Michael Jackson: The Experience	205	58%
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	173	84%
Mindjack	202	38%
Mini Ninjas	184	80%
Mirror's Edge	173	71%
ModNation Racers	192	90%
The best kart racer by far on the PlayStation 3, but combined with incredible levels of creativity. If you love LBP you'll love this, too.		
Monster Madness	170	78%
Mortal Kombat	205	81%
Mortal Kombat vs DC Universe	173	68%
MotoGP 08	172	65%
MotoGP 09/10	190	77%
MotoGP 10/11	204	64%
MotorStorm	151	92%
MotorStorm: Apocalypse	203	76%
MotorStorm: Pacific Rift	172	93%
Mud: FIM Motocross Championship	217	50%
MX vs ATV: Alive	206	42%
MX vs ATV Reflex	189	68%
MX vs ATV Untamed	164	58%
naïd	201	61%
Naruto: Ultimate Ninja Storm	174	59%
Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm Generations	217	53%
NASCAR 08	157	38%

game	issue	score
Naughty Bear	195	64%
NBA 07	153	33%
NBA 2K7	151	76%
NBA 2K8	172	71%
NBA 2K10	186	79%
NBA 2K11	199	82%
NBA 2K12	211	88%
NBA Jam	200	68%
NBA Live 08	158	59%
NBA Live 09	170	81%
NBA Street: Homecourt	151	68%
Need For Speed Carbon	151	76%
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit	199	91%
Hot Pursuit is one of the best arcade racers of all time - pure, unadulterated bliss in game form.		
Need For Speed ProStreet	161	86%
Need For Speed Shift	184	81%
Need For Speed: The Run	213	63%
Need For Speed Undercover	173	75%
NeverDead	215	39%
Nier	192	54%
NHL 2K7	151	80%
NHL 2K9	172	67%
NHL 2K10	186	70%
NHL 09	170	88%
NHL 10	184	85%
NHL 11	198	89%
NHL 12	210	78%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	154	88%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2	184	82%
Ninja Gaiden 3	217	63%
No More Heroes: Heroes' Paradise	206	89%
Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising	185	78%
Operation Flashpoint: Red River	205	75%
The Orange Box	161	93%
Overlord: Raising Hell	167	65%
Overlord II	181	68%
Pain	183	69%
PES 2008	159	70%
PES 2009	172	80%
PES 2010	185	72%
PES 2011	197	73%
PES 2012	210	74%
Phineas & Ferb: Across The 2nd Dimension	211	66%
PixelJunk Racers	160	74%
PlayStation Move Heroes	204	54%
POTC: At World's End	154	48%
Portal 2	205	95%
Another exceptional realisation from Valve, gamers are going to be talking about Portal 2 for a long time to come.		
Prince Of Persia	174	83%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	193	68%
Prince Of Persia Trilogy	200	88%
Prison Break: The Conspiracy	191	40%
Prototype	181	76%
Prototype 2	219	75%
Puma After Hours Athletes	214	58%
Pure	171	80%
Pure Football	194	69%
Quantum Of Solace	175	57%
Quantum Theory	197	29%
Race Driver: GRID	167	85%
Racket Sports	198	37%
Rage	211	60%
Rainbow Six Vegas	155	88%
Rainbow Six Vegas 2	164	78%
Rango	203	54%
Ratchet & Clank: A Crack In Time	186	82%
Ratchet & Clank: All 4 One	211	68%
Ratchet & Clank: Tools Of Destruction	160	72%
Ratchet & Clank Trilogy HD	221	88%
Rayman Origins	212	80%
Red Dead Redemption	193	92%
Relocates the familiar GTA formula to a superbly realised new setting and, in many ways, is unlike anything else as a result.		

*denotes import review

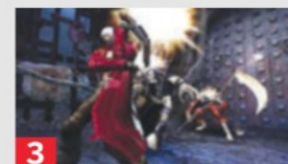
TOP TEN PROGENITORS TO UPCOMING SEQUELS



BioShock



Grand Theft Auto IV



Devil May Cry 3



Hitman: Blood Money



Assassin's Creed Brotherhood



Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit



COD: Modern Warfare 2



Borderlands

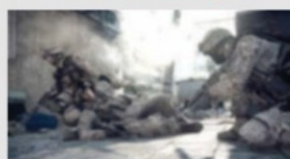


Medal Of Honor



Far Cry 2

PS3 TOP FIVES



FPS

- 1 Battlefield 3
- 1 Modern Warfare 3
- 3 Deus Ex: Human Revolution
- 4 Portal 2
- 5 Resistance 3



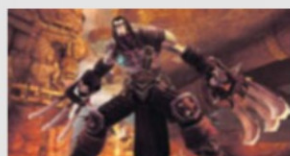
RACING

- 1 WipEout 2048
- 2 Dirt: Showdown
- 3 Gran Turismo 5
- 4 Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit
- 5 MotorStorm RC



PS VITA

- 1 Gravity Rush
- 2 WipEout 2048
- 3 Everybody's Golf
- 4 Uncharted: Golden Abyss
- 5 Velocity



ADVENTURE

- 1 Mass Effect 3
- 2 The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim
- 3 Dark Souls
- 4 Darksiders 2
- 5 Lego Batman 2: DC Super Heroes



FIGHTING

- 1 Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike
- 2 Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown
- 3 BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Extend
- 4 Skullgirls
- 5 SoulCalibur V

game issue score

Red Dead Redemption: Undead Nightmare	199	87%
Red Faction: Armageddon	207	62%
Red Faction: Guerrilla	180	80%
Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City	217	33%
Resident Evil 5	177	86%
Resident Evil 5: Gold Edition	190	86%
Resistance: Fall Of Man	151	83%
Resistance 2	173	90%



With its impressive set-pieces and glorious multiplayer mode, *Resistance 2* is one of the best FPSs on the PS3.

Resistance 3	210	88%
Resonance Of Fate	191	79%
Ridge Racer 7	151	75%
Ridge Racer Unbounded	217	67%
Rise Of The Argonauts	176	58%
Rock Band	169	94%
Rock Band 2	179	96%
Rock Band 3	199	84%
Rogue Warrior	188	09%
Rugby World Cup 2011	209	49%
Rune Factory Oceans	220	51%
R.U.S.E.	197	82%
The Saboteur	187	67%
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	180	76%
Saints Row 2	172	79%
Saints Row: The Third	211	88%
SBK Generations	220	51%
Saint Seiya: Sanctuary Battle	216	52%
Saw	186	52%
Saw II: Flesh & Blood	198	36%
Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection	177	85%
SBK 08	172	55%
SBK 2011	206	70%
SBK Generations	220	54%
SBK X: Superbike World Championship	193	67%
Sega Rally	158	92%



Simply the best rally game on the PS3. Unless simulation is your bag then you'll want to go for *Colin McRae*. Not much in it, really.

Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	198	76%
Shadows Of The Damned	207	79%
Shaun White Skateboarding	198	70%
Shaun White Snowboarding	173	72%
Shellshock 2: Blood Trails	177	32%
Shift 2: Unleashed	204	66%
The Shoot	199	76%
Silent Hill: Downpour	217	81%
Silent Hill HD Collection	217	76%
Silent Hill: Homecoming	174	64%
The Simpsons Game	160	82%
The Sims 3	199	87%
The Sims 3: Pets	212	70%
SingStar	159	80%
SingStar Guitar	199	70%
SingStar Pop Edition	179	81%
Singularity	195	80%
Skate	159	86%
Skate 2	175	82%
Skate 3	192	86%
The Sly Collection	200	84%
Sniper Elite V2	218	52%
Sniper: Ghost Warrior	206	45%
SOCOM: Special Forces	205	63%
Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing	190	78%
Sonic Generations	212	70%
Sonic The Hedgehog	151	52%
Sonic Unleashed	175	48%
Sorcery	219	76%
SoulCalibur IV	169	94%
SoulCalibur V	214	80%
Spec Ops: The Line	220	59%
Spider-Man 3	155	33%
Spider-Man: Edge Of Time	212	38%
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	197	69%
Spider-Man: Web Of Shadows	173	55%
Splatterhouse	200	58%
Splinter Cell Double Agent	153	79%
Split/Second: Velocity	192	90%



Just beating *Blur* to the chequered flag, *Split/Second* is a wonderfully intense racing game in the *Burnout* mould.

Sports Champions	196	83%
SSX	216	45%
Starhawk	219	81%
Star Ocean: The Last Hope International	190	63%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	171	65%
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	199	61%

game issue score

Start The Party!	196	72%
Stormrise	178	51%
Stranglehold	159	65%
Street Fighter IV	176	95%
Street Fighter X Tekken	217	83%
Super Street Fighter IV: Arcade Edition	207	88%
Stuntman: Ignition	157	82%
SuperCar Challenge	183	66%
Superstars V8: Next Challenge	190	55%
Superstars V8 Racing	181	63%
Super Street Fighter IV	191	90%
Supremacy MMA	211	40%
Syndicate	216	78%
Tekken 6	184	94%



There are flaws that hurt the experience, but nothing, *nothing*, stops *Tekken 6* from being an intense, tactical and brilliant fighting game.

Tekken Hybrid	213	79%
Test Drive Ferrari Racing Legends	221	60%
Test Drive Unlimited 2	203	62%
The Amazing Spider-Man	221	61%
Thor: God Of Thunder	206	38%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	151	88%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	158	73%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09	171	86%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10	181	69%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	194	60%
Tiger Woods PGA 12: The Masters	204	65%
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 13	217	70%
Time Crisis 4	166	69%
Time Crisis: Razing Storm	199	58%
TimeShift	162	72%
TNA Impact!	171	71%
Tom Clancy's EndWar	173	80%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X.	177	75%
Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X. 2	196	69%
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Trilogy HD	210	78%
Tomb Raider Trilogy	204	86%
Tomb Raider: Underworld	173	83%
Tony Hawk's Project 8	151	85%
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	160	72%
Tony Hawk: Ride	188	52%
Top Gun: Hard Lock	218	45%
Top Spin 3	168	71%
Top Spin 4	203	60%
Tornado Outbreak	186	56%
Toy Story 3	195	82%
Transformers: Dark Of The Moon	208	64%
Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen	182	41%
Transformers: The Game	156	34%
Transformers: War For Cybertron	194	80%
Trinity: Souls Of Zill O'll	202	56%
Trinity Universe	194	61%
Tron Evolution	200	17%
Turning Point: Fall Of Liberty	165	40%
Turok	163	46%
TV Superstars	199	53%
Twisted Metal	216	68%
Two Worlds II	203	64%
UEFA Euro 2008	165	62%
UFC Undisputed 2009	180	90%
UFC Undisputed 2010	193	88%
UFC Undisputed 3	215	82%
Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3	212	78%
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	161	87%
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	185	96%
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception	212	90%



Fans of the series won't be disappointed as Drake returns with some exceptional set pieces and superb action.

Unreal Tournament III	162	88%
Untold Legends: Dark Kingdom	151	54%
Valkyria Chronicles	173	82%
Vancouver 2010	189	76%
Vanquish	197	93%



A brilliant surprise from the developer of *Bayonetta* and easily one of the best games we've played in 2010.

Viking: Battle For Asgard	165	74%
Virtua Fighter 5	151	83%
Virtua Tennis 2009	180	80%
Virtua Tennis 3	150	91%
Virtua Tennis 4	205	79%
Wanted: Weapons Of Fate	179	63%
Warhammer 40,000: Space Marine	210	51%
Warhawk	157	84%
Warriors: Legends Of Troy	202	14%
Warriors Orochi 3	217	59%

game issue score

Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Way Of The Samurai 3	190	16%
Wet	184	41%
Wheelman	178	72%
Where The Wild Things Are	188	56%
White Knight Chronicles	190	55%
White Knight Chronicles II	207	49%
Wolfenstein	183	72%
World Snooker Championship 2007	151	56%
WRC: FIA World Rally Championship	197	76%
WRC 2: FIA World Rally Championship	211	63%
WSC REAL 09: World Snooker Championship	177	67%
WSC Real 11	204	69%
WWE All Stars	204	82%
WWE Legends Of WrestleMania	178	80%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2008	159	88%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2009	173	74%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2010	185	77%
WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2011	199	63%
WWE 12	212	50%
X-Blades	178	54%
X-Men Destiny	211	35%
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	179	71%
Yakuza: Dead Souls	216	60%
Yakuza 3	191	80%
Yakuza 4	203	79%
Yoostar 2: In The Movies	204	60%

PS VITA LISTING



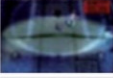
A-Men	217	70%
Amy Corps Of Hell	217	64%
Everybody's Golf	215	86%
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift Extend	216	85%
Escape Plan	216	81%
FIFA Football	216	80%
Gravity Rush	219	86%
Hustle Kings	216	81%
Little Deviants	215	69%
Lumines Electric Symphony	216	85%
MGS HD Collection	221	70%
ModNation Racers: Road Trip	215	59%
Mortal Kombat	219	83%
MotorStorm RC	217	81%
Ninja Gaiden Sigma Plus	217	72%
Rayman Origins	216	84%
Reality Fighters	215	52%
Resistance: Burning Skies	219	54%
Ridge Racer	216	48%
Super Stardust Delta	216	84%
Touch My Katamari	216	83%
Ultimate Marvel vs Capcom 3	216	80%
Uncharted: Golden Abyss	215	83%
Unit 13	216	67%
Virtua Tennis 4: World Tour Edition	215	81%
WipEout 2048	215	87%

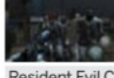
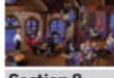
PS STORE LISTING



1942: Joint Strike	170	74%
3-On-3 NHL Arcade	177	62%
After Burner Climax	193	91%
Age Of Booty	172	81%
Alien Breed: Impact	196	80%
Alien Breed 2: Assault	201	82%
Alien Breed 3: Descent	204	61%
All Zombies Must Die!	214	64%
Amy	215	19%
Anarchy: Rush Hour	194	73%
Aqua Panic	193	68%
Arc The Lad	215	79%
Armageddon Riders	207	65%
Atelier Meruru: The Apprentice Of Arland	221	35%
Back To The Future: It's About Time	204	71%
The Baoning	210	72%
Battlefield 1943	182	89%
Beat Hazard Ultra	213	79%
Beat Sketcher	201	85%
Beyond Good & Evil HD	207	86%
Bishi Bashi Special!	175	61%
Bionic Commando Rearmed	169	88%
Bionic Commando Rearmed 2	203	61%
Blacklight: Tango Down	200	64%

game	issue	score
Blade Kitten	197	72%
Blast Factor	152	72%
Blokus	202	54%
BloodRayne: Betrayal	211	62%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode I	188	65%
Blue Toad Murder Files: The Mysteries Of Little Riddle Episode II	188	61%
Blue Toad Murder Files Episodes 4/5/6	193	70%
Bomberman Ultra	185	82%
Braid	188	93%
 We had to wait quite a while, but time is what we have plenty of both with and for <i>Braid</i> . Simply brilliant.		
Burn Zombie Burn	178	85%
Burnout Crash	211	79%
Call Of Duty Classic	188	90%
Calling All Cars	155	81%
Castle Crashers	200	88%
Castlevania: Harmony Of Despair	212	67%
Catan	195	85%
Chime Super Deluxe	203	80%
Comet Crash	186	84%
Comix Zone	210	62%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert	16	79%
Command & Conquer Red Alert: Retaliation	176	55%
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	168	70%
Commander's Challenge	185	68%
Command & Conquer	175	44%
Cool Boarders	173	57%
Cool Boarders 2	175	31%
Costume Quest	199	70%
Crash Bandicoot	172	77%
Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped	174	82%
Crash Commando	174	80%
Crash Team Racing	170	79%
Crazy Machines Elements	210	71%
Crazy Taxi	200	80%
Crescent Pale Mist	200	70%
Critter Crunch	188	91%
Crystal Defenders	184	48%
Cubix HD	207	76%
Dark Mist	164	53%
Dead Nation	201	86%
Dead Space: Extraction	203	88%
Dead Space: Ignition	199	47%
DeathSpank	195	83%
Destruction Derby	01	80%
.detuned	186	50%
Deus Ex	219	83%
Digger HD	186	52%
Diner Dash	190	66%
Driver	171	90%
Droplitz	184	91%
Earthworm Jim HD	196	89%
Eat Them!	202	60%
echochrome	169	85%
echochrome II	202	83%
Elefunk	170	45%
Euforia	212	85%
Explodemon	203	70%
Fat Princess	183	65%
Fatal Inertia EX	168	65%
FIFA 09 Ultimate Team	178	61%
Final Fight: Double Impact	193	90%
Final Fantasy VII	181	96%
Final Fantasy VIII	190	90%
Final Fantasy IX	195	90%
Flight Control HD	198	85%
Flock!	179	70%
flOw	151	90%
Flower	176	85%
Frogger: Hyper Arcade Edition	221	55%
Frogger Returns	190	35%
From Dust	211	82%
Funky Lab Rat	201	70%
G-Police	27	84%
Galaxy Fight	215	27%
Gatling Gears	207	62%
Geon	175	71%
Go! Puzzle	152	58%
God Hand	216	83%
Gotham City Impostors	216	78%
Gran Turismo HD	150	75%
Gravity Crash	187	85%
Greed Corp	191	75%
Greg Hastings Paintball 2	219	22%
GTI Club+	174	72%

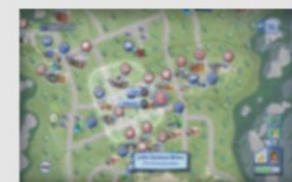
game	issue	score
Gundemonium Collection	197	80%
Gunstar Heroes	181	85%
Hamsterball	194	72%
Hardcore 4x4	15	81%
Hasbro Family Game Night	187	60%
Heavy Weapon	187	75%
High Velocity Bowling	163	50%
Hi-Octane	178	64%
The House Of The Dead 4	218	82%
Hustle Kings	190	87%
Hyperballoid HD	188	70%
I Am Alive	217	64%
inFamous: Festival Of Blood	212	76%
Inferno Pool	181	81%
International Track & Field	171	80%
Interpol: The Trail Of Doctor Chaos	185	48%
Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao	185	70%
Jet Rider 2	176	71%
Joe Danger	194	96%
 Simply put, <i>Joe Danger</i> is one of the best games you'll currently find on the PSN. Buy it. Buy it now.		
Journey	216	87%
Judge Dredd	18	19%
Jumping Flash	172	55%
Jurassic Park: The Game	214	32%
Kick-Ass The Game	194	60%
Kula World	172	71%
Kung-Fu Live	201	42%
Landit Bandit	195	66%
Lara Croft And The Guardian Of Light	198	90%
The Last Guy	171	91%
Lead & Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West	193	65%
Lemmings	151	79%
Limbo	209	90%
Linger In Shadows	173	69%
LocoRoco Cocoreccho!	159	80%
Lumines Supernova	178	90%
Madden NFL Arcade	188	58%
Mad Riders	220	70%
Magic Carpet	179	65%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers	202	84%
Magic: The Gathering: Duels Of The Planeswalkers 2012	208	70%
Marvel vs Capcom 2	182	90%
Matt Hazard: Blood Bath And Beyond	189	69%
Medal Of Honor: Frontline	210	52%
MediEvil	173	45%
Mega Man 9	172	75%
Mega Man 10	192	82%
Metal Gear Solid	187	93%
 While it looks rather rough now, the game itself remains a real high point in the franchise. Simply essential.		
Metal Gear Solid Online	175	45%
Microbot	202	51%
Monkey Island 2: Special Edition	195	94%
Motorhead	173	60%
Namco Museum Essentials	193	60%
Naruto Shippuden: Kizuna Drive	205	42%
NBA Jam: On Fire Edition	212	64%
Noby Noby Boy	177	85%
Nucleus	155	82%
Numblast	183	60%
N20	37	70%
Oddworld: Stranger's Wrath HD	214	86%
Outland	207	72%
OutRun Online Arcade	180	80%
Pac-Man Championship Edition DX	201	91%
Payday: The Heist	213	88%
Pain	183	69%
Peggle	189	94%
Pinballistik	215	75%
PixelJunk 4am	220	40%
PixelJunk Eden	169	67%
PixelJunk Monsters	163	94%
PixelJunk Shooter	187	93%
PixelJunk Shooter 2	204	90%
PixelJunk SideScroller	213	77%
Piyotama	162	62%
Planet Minigolf	196	58%
Polar Panic	190	65%
Populous: The Beginning	46	70%
Prince Of Persia Classic	173	67%
Puddle	216	76%
The Punisher: No Mercy	182	49%
Puzzle Chronicles	194	70%
Puzzle Dimension	208	81%

game	issue	score
Puzzle Quest Galactrix	181	68%
Q*bert	58	53%
Quantum Conundrum	221	90%
 If you loved <i>Portal 2</i> , you'll love this. Swapping portals for dimension altering, it's the same mix of physics-based puzzles and humour.		
Rag Doll Kung Fu: Fists Of Plastic	179	83%
Rampage: World Tour	29	77%
Rainbow Moon	221	68%
Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty	170	69%
Rayman	01	76%
Rayman 3 HD	217	77%
Renegade Ops	211	78%
Resident Evil 4 HD	210	93%
 One of the best games ever made comes to PSN. Unfortunately it also brings with it a rather high price tag.		
Resident Evil Code Veronica X	211	72%
Resident Evil Chronicles HD Collection	221	82%
Revenge Of The Wounded Dragons	191	60%
Riff: Everyday Shooter	162	86%
Risk: Factions	202	80%
Rocketbirds: Hardboiled Chicken	212	82%
Rocket Knight	194	74%
Rocketmen: Axis Of Evil	165	63%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 1	194	90%
Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse Episode 2	194	92%
Sega Rally Online Arcade	208	74%
Savage Moon	175	87%
Scott Pilgrim vs The World	197	77%
The Secret Of Monkey Island Special Edition	195	92%
 LucasArts' classic point-and-click adventure gets an HD makeover and will hopefully be the first of many classics heading to PSN.		
Section 8	193	78%
Section 8: Prejudice	209	80%
Shank	197	86%
Shatter	183	91%
Sheep	171	78%
Shoot Many Robots	217	81%
The Simpsons: Arcade Game	216	54%
Siren Blood Curse	170	62%
Skullgirls	218	88%
Smash Cars	184	50%
SOCOM Confrontation	178	55%
Soldner-X 2: Final Prototype	195	70%
Sonic Adventure	198	63%
Sonic CD	214	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode I	199	82%
Sonic The Hedgehog 4: Episode II	220	40%
Spin Jam	174	32%
Snakeball	176	92%
Stacking	203	88%
Star Trek: D-A-C	189	57%
Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream	159	57%
Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike Online Edition	209	92%
 The best version of one of the best fighting games ever released, or something. We don't know, mainly because Ryan isn't writing this.		
Street Skater 2	178	40%
Super Puzzle Fighter II HD Turbo Remix	168	78%
Super Rub-A-Dub	151	83%
Supersonic Acrobatic Rocket-Powered Battle-Cars	177	65%
Super Stardust HD	155	74%
Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix	176	72%
Switchball	191	75%
Swords And Soldiers	199	88%
Syphon Filter	48	93%
Syphon Filter 3	170	80%
Tales Of Monkey Island	196	91%
Tank Battles	186	68%
Tekken HD	150	80%
Tekken 5: Dark Resurrection Online	161	87%
Tetris	202	84%
Theme Hospital	32	80%
Theme Park	174	80%
TMNT: Turtles In Time Re-shelled	186	57%
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six	54	34%
Top Darts	202	71%
Top Gun	198	53%
Topotai: Spinning Through The Worlds	183	61%
ToyHome	162	31%
Trash Panic	181	79%
Trials Of Topaq	159	50%
Trine	184	85%
Tumble	198	70%
Under Siege	207	71%
Uno	189	85%

PS3'S BEST GAMES THE SIMS 3 87%, PLAY 199



Yes, this does say PS3's 'best games' and yes, we are being serious. *The Sims 3* was the first time we got a 'proper' *Sims* game on console, and it's the first time we've got really enthusiastic about the series on PlayStation.



It's not a military first-person shooter, so that might put some of you off, and it doesn't have tricky platforming sections to navigate, so a fair few others might have ignored it. But those who didn't ignore it were treated to some pure gaming goodness.



There's a distinct joy that comes with looking after your tiny people, managing their lives in whatever way you see fit. Oddly, considering we're psychos in training, it's just as much fun doing things *right* as it is just messing a Sim's life up entirely.

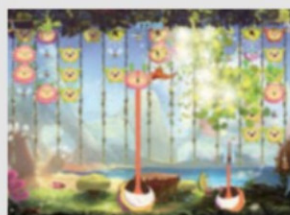


No, really – try it. Try making your little person live a normal, fulfilling life where they achieve success and become something more than they ever could have dreamed they would be when the game first began. It's actually fun.



Though it does then smack you in the face with the crushing disappointment that is your own, real life, as you realise you're stuck in a rut you'll never get out of and there's no omnipotent, cursor-toting being there to guide you in any way. Sigh.

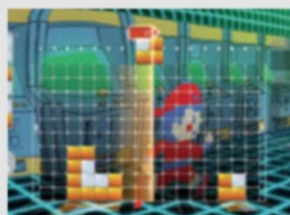
DOWNLOAD THESE PUZZLING EDITION



CRITTER CRUNCH

91%, Play 188

Aside from being really pretty indeed, *Critter Crunch* is also ridiculously good fun, adding vomiting to a more traditional match-'em-up puzzler. No, really.



LUMINES SUPERNOVA

90%, Play 178

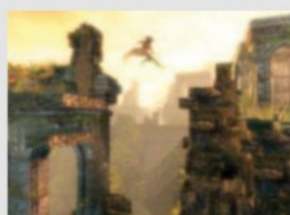
You'll spend a while not really 'getting' *Lumines*, confusedly pawing at buttons and cooing at prettiness. Then it clicks. And when it clicks, you won't stop playing.



PEGGLE

94%, Play 189

Peggle, *Peggle*, *Peggle*, *Peggle*. No words for you, *Peggle*. No way to explain the joy. No way to shake you from our mind.



TRINE

85%, Play 184

A bit more action in your puzzling is required, sometimes, and *Trine* and its sequel scratch that itch nicely. Plus it's really pretty.



TETRIS

84%, Play 202

How could we recommend puzzle games and not put *Tetris* in? Though there is one person in the office who still claims this is an action game. Idiot.

game	issue	score
Vagrant Story	189	82%
Vandal Hearts: Flames Of Judgment	192	87%
Virtua Fighter 5: Final Showdown	220	90%
The Walking Dead	219	89%
The Walking Dead Episode 2	221	90%



Even better than the first episode thanks to the decisions being even harder to make, this is point-and-click gaming at its finest.

Wakeboarding HD	192	65%
Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star	171	80%
Watchmen: The End Is Nigh	183	55%
Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?	214	79%
WipEout	01	89%
WipEout HD	172	84%
Wolfenstein	181	70%
Wonder Boy In Monster Land	220	50%
Worms	179	91%
Worms 2: Armageddon	198	87%
Worms Battle Islands	201	80%
Worms Crazy Golf	213	82%
Worms: Ultimate Mayhem	217	80%
X-Men Arcade	203	60%
Yars' Revenge	206	57%
Zack Zero	215	73%
Zombie Apocalypse: Never Die Alone	213	69%
Zuma	182	78%

PSP LISTING



The 3rd Birthday	203	80%
300: March To Glory	152	59%
Ace Combat X	147	72%
Ace Combat: Joint Assault	194	79%
After Burner: Black Falcon	152	82%
Ape Academy 2	145	52%
Ape Escape P	140	37%
Army Of Two: The 40th Day	190	45%
Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines	187	77%
Astonishia Story	142	68%
Beaterator	186	72%
Blade Dancer: Lineage Of Light	145	45%
BlazBlue: Calamity Trigger Portable	194	84%
Blood Bowl	184	53%
Bomberman	150	83%
Boulder Dash: Rocks!	165	69%
Breath Of Fire III	138	82%
Brothers In Arms: D-Day	149	69%
Burnout Dominator	153	65%
Burnout Legends	134	94%
Buzz! Brain Bender	175	68%
Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded	147	80%
Capcom Classics Collection Remixed	141	72%
Cars	143	60%
Castlevania: The Dracula X Chronicles	163	78%
Championship Manager	137	65%
Championship Manager 2006	140	32%
Cid The Dummy	180	32%
Coded Arms	134	53%
Call Of Duty: Roads To Victory	153	69%
Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus	134	84%
The Con	153	59%
Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII	167	87%
Crush	154	80%
The Cube	153	64%
Dante's Inferno	191	76%
Dead Or Alive: Paradise	192	56%
Disgaea: Afternoon Of Darkness	161	92%
Dissidia: Final Fantasy	184	60%
Dissidia 012 Final Fantasy	203	79%
Disgaea 2: Dark Hero Days	190	87%
Dragon Ball Z: Shin Budokai 2	154	50%
Driver 76	154	68%
Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics	159	55%
Dungeon Siege: Throne Of Agony	148	85%
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce	179	69%
EA Replay	147	74%
echochrome	169	85%
echoshift	191	73%
Everybody's Golf 2	167	86%
Everybody's Tennis	195	88%
Every Extend Extra	145	84%
Exit	138	65%
The Eye Of Judgment: Legends	191	57%
EyePet	199	77%
F1 2009	187	66%
Fate/Extra	219	60%
Field Commander	145	83%
FIFA 06	136	43%

game	issue	score
FIFA 07	147	81%
FIFA 11	198	69%
FIFA World Cup 2010	193	65%
Fired Up	134	60%
Final Fantasy	164	63%
Final Fantasy IV: The Complete Collection	204	80%
Final Fantasy Tactics	159	86%
FlatOut: Head On	164	79%
Football Manager 2007	147	62%
Football Manager Handheld 2008	161	49%
Football Manager Handheld 2010	187	60%
Formula One 06	143	78%
Frantix	136	36%
Gangs Of London	144	65%
Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2	157	42%
Ghost Recon Predator	200	60%
Ghostbusters: The Video Game	188	55%
Ghostbusters: Sanctum Of Slime	204	51%
Gitroo Man Lives!	144	79%
Gladiator Begins	206	52%
Go! Sudoku	137	45%
The Godfather: Mob Wars	136	66%
Gods Eater Burst	202	88%
God Of War: Chains Of Olympus	165	84%
God Of War: Ghost Of Sparta	199	79%
Gradius Collection	144	80%
Gran Turismo	184	85%
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	185	95%
GTA: Liberty City Stories	135	95%
GTA: Vice City Stories	147	96%
Half-Minute Hero	191	87%
Hard Corps: Uprising	204	78%
Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire	136	69%
Heilboy: Science Of Evil	170	60%
Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman! What Did I Do To Deserve This?	186	73%
Hot Pixel	155	73%
Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings	181	60%
Infected	141	68%
Innocent Life: A Futuristic Harvest Moon	154	70%
International Athletics	170	40%
Invizimals	187	71%
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	187	59%
Juiced: Eliminator	141	70%
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	160	80%
Kao Challengers	137	60%
Killzone: Liberation	146	83%
Kingdom Hearts: Birth By Sleep	196	88%
The Legend Of Heroes: Trails In The Sky	214	75%
Lemmings	138	63%
LittleBigPlanet	186	90%
LocoRoco	143	94%
LocoRoco 2	173	82%
LocoRoco Midnight Carnival	186	81%
Lord Of Arcana	202	65%
The Lord Of The Rings: Tactics	136	66%
Lumines II	137	74%
Madden NFL 06	137	74%
Marvel Trading Cards	155	38%
Me And My Katamari	138	86%
Medal Of Honor Heroes	147	72%
MediEvil: Resurrection	134	53%
Mercury Meltdown	145	66%
Metal Slug Anthology	150	91%
Metal Gear Acid 2	138	92%
Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker	193	92%
Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	150	91%
Miami Vice	144	82%
Micro Machines V4	142	71%
Might & Magic: Clash Of Heroes	205	84%
ModNation Racers	193	70%
Monster Hunter Freedom	140	81%
Monster Hunter Freedom 2	157	59%
Monster Hunter Freedom Unite	181	77%
Moon Diver	205	46%
MotoGP	146	75%
Motorstorm: Arctic Edge	184	72%
Mytran Wars	179	85%
Namco Museum Battle Collection	136	68%
Naruto Shippuden Legends	185	46%
Naruto Ultimate Ninja Heroes 2	169	46%
NBA Ballers: Rebound	139	61%
Need For Speed Undercover	175	57%
No Heroes Allowed	199	69%
OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast	139	93%
PaRappa The Rapper	155	88%
Patapon	163	86%
Patapon 2	177	87%
Patapon 3	205	81%
Patchwork Heroes	192	85%
Persona 2: Innocent Sin	214	65%

game	issue	score
Pirates Of The Caribbean	143	52%
PixelJunk Monster Deluxe	185	86%
Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	163	77%
Pocket Racers	144	49%
PoPoLoCroIS	142	71%
Power Stone Collection	145	88%
PQ - Practical Intelligence Quotient	141	52%
Prince Of Persia Revelations	138	69%
Prince Of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	194	52%
Prinny: Can I Really Be The Hero?	181	80%
PSN Collection: Power Pack	173	70%
PSN Collection: Puzzle Pack	173	54%
Pursuit Force	134	83%
Pursuit Force: Extreme Justice	159	76%
Puzzle Chronicles	190	61%
Puzzle Quest	153	66%
R-Type Tactics	170	74%
Rainbow Six Vegas	156	78%
Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	154	78%
Red Faction: Battlegrounds	205	78%
Rengoku 2	144	72%
Resistance: Retribution	177	76%
Ridge Racer 2	145	78%
Ridge Racer	132	91%
Rock Band Unplugged	181	92%
Rocky Balboa	150	68%
Secret Agent Clank	169	79%
Sega Mega Drive Collection	177	79%
Sega Rally	158	90%
Shin Megami Tensei: Persona 3 Portable	206	78%
Shinobido: Tales Of The Ninja	150	60%
Silent Hill Origins	160	87%
Silent Hill: Shattered Memories	190	52%
The Sims 2	137	71%
Slam Bolt Scrappers	204	73%
Smash Court Tennis	154	58%
SOCOM Fire Team 2	154	70%
SOCOM: Fireteam Bravo 3	190	71%
SOCOM: Tactical Strike	160	85%
SOCOM: US Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo	140	69%
Sonic Rivals	147	70%
Sonic Rivals 2	162	35%
SoulCalibur: Broken Destiny	183	92%
Spider-Man 3	162	32%
Spinout	149	81%
Splinter Cell: Essentials	139	71%
Split/Second: Velocity	200	71%
SSX On Tour	138	76%
Star Ocean: Second Evolution	178	78%
Star Trek: Tactical Assault	148	59%
Star Wars Battlefront II	137	74%
Star Wars Battlefront: Elite Squadron	187	65%
Star Wars: Lethal Alliance	148	69%
Star Wars: Renegade Squadron	160	78%
Street Fighter Alpha 3 Max	138	70%
Street Riders	140	29%
Super Monkey Ball Adventure	142	54%
Swarm	204	78%
Syphon Filter: Dark Mirror	140	90%
Tekken 6	187	90%
Tekken: Dark Resurrection	143	92%
Tactics Ogre: Let Us Cling Together	202	81%
Tenchu: Shadow Assassins	179	71%
Tenchu: Time Of The Assassins	146	51%
TNA Impact! Cross The Line	189	58%
TOCA 3	152	70%
Tokobot	140	79%
Tomb Raider: Anniversary	156	81%
Tomb Raider: Legend	140	72%
Twisted Metal Head-On	134	54%
UFC Undisputed 2010	197	80%
Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins	145	88%
Undead Knights	189	46%
Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code	140	59%
Valhalla Knights	158	49%
Valkyria Chronicles 2	196	87%
Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth	153	78%
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	140	82%
Virtua Tennis 3	152	88%
Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	161	70%
What Did I Do To Deserve This My Lord!? 2	192	78%
WipEout Pulse	159	86%
WipEout Pure	138	91%
World Of Pool	156	43%
World Tour Poker	141	67%
World Tour Soccer 2	142	40%
Worms: Open Warfare 2	157	80%
WWE SmackDown! vs Raw 2006	137	84%
WWE SmackDown! vs Raw 2007	147	80%
World Rally Championship	134	67%

*denotes import review



IAN DRANSFIELD

WHAT (HAVE THEY BEEN PLAYING?):

DEUS EX: HUMAN REVOLUTION

WHY (WAS IT CHOSEN?):

I didn't use the Typhoon aug first time around. No, really

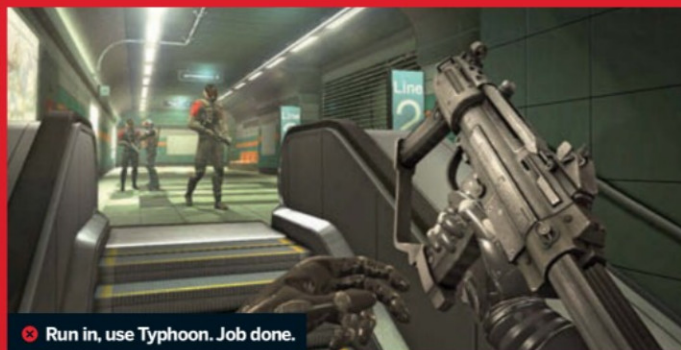
SEEING AS SQUEENIX decided, rather gracefully, to offer *Human Rev* as a free PS Plus download, I downloaded it. Seemed rude not to, really, especially as I haven't played it since handling the review last year. Instantly I was engrossed again, feeling it, adoring the look of the world, admiring the craftwork on David Sarif's robo-arm. But there was another reason for being there – something far more important: I never used the Typhoon bomblet system first time around. I never used it, and I hated the bosses with a vengeance. Something had gone seriously wrong in my mindbox, it seems.

For you see, using the Typhoon bombs augmentation is basically a cheat button that allows you to gloss over the boss fights, getting through them in record time without having to put in much effort at all. I did not know this at the time. I know it now. I intend to go through the game and eff those buggers up, because they caused far too much teeth-gnashing for it to be healthy.

And you know what else it will do? It will make me enjoy *Human Revolution* even more than I did first time around. That makes me happiest of all. Wait, no – being able to screw over the bosses makes me happiest. That's the one.



Run in, use Typhoon. Job done.



Run in, use Typhoon. Job done.

PLAYING THE PLAYLIST

What has the Play team been indulging in this month?



What even is this boss?



There he is. The temperamental git.



RYAN KING

WHAT (HAVE THEY BEEN PLAYING?):

DARK SOULS

WHY (WAS IT CHOSEN?):

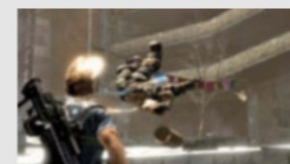
I won't smash the merchant's face in

It was maybe the worst reason to stop playing a game. After putting roughly ten hours into *Dark Souls* and knowing the first 'main' part with the bridge inside-out (I still remember that little bastard on the roof throwing bombs), I made one mistake. Having reached the undead merchant, I decided to get a real-life drink and, putting the pad on the floor, hit R2 by mistake. I wasn't quick enough to stop my character swinging for the merchant, who was understandably a bit miffed by the whole fiasco. He's the only merchant for miles, I'd been warned. He's crucial in the early stages of *Dark Souls*! And now I've just wedged a sword in his face. I quickly quit the game but it reloaded to the moment where I was pulling my sword out of the merchant's left-eye socket. Sigh.

Instead of starting again, I gave up as other games started coming in – *Uncharted 3*, *Saints Row: The Third*, *Mass Effect 3* and so on. But it's time to go back. Time to learn *Dark Souls* properly this time. Time to see if I can make it through the graveyard with all the skeletons. Time to see if I can actually beat that dragon on the castle bridge breathing fire everywhere. Time to man up and stand up to the hardest game release on PlayStation 3.

And this time, I won't be thwarted by my own thirst for a single bloody bottle of Frijj. Stupid merchant.

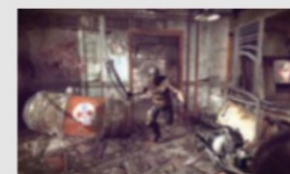
PLAY'S BEST GAMES IF YOU LIKE...



Disliking gravity

PLAY: INVERSION

This isn't a recommendation if you like playing interesting games and, in fact, the more we think of it, the more we realise you should just play *Dead Space 2* instead because its no gravity sections were actually good.



Satisfying gunplay

PLAY: RAGE

So the game as a whole didn't go down too well, but one area we will never stop loving is the gunplay: chunky, dominant, satisfying. And oh! The reactions of all those bullet-peppered enemies, stumbling and scrabbling. The guns are good.



Wishing everyone was dead

PLAY: FALLOUT 3

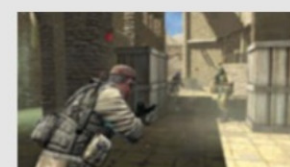
All right, not absolutely everyone, but most people. Live out your favourite Armageddon-inspired (not the film) fantasies! See the devastation! Hear the sounds of a dead civilisation! Laugh as you realise you're pretty much alone and most of the rubbish people are dead!



The Club

PLAY: UNIT 13

Short, score-attack missions that can and will addict as long as you let them. *Unit 13* wasn't the best game, but it's perfect for those bored of *The Club*.



Unit 13

PLAY: THE CLUB

Short, score-attack missions that can and will addict as long as you let them. *The Club* wasn't the best game, but it's perfect for those bored of *Unit 13*.



ARMORED CORE V



WHAT WE SAID

PLAY 211
"Yes, this is from the same developer that made *Dark Souls*. Yes, it isn't terrible. No, the Common Man likely won't care for it. Yes, we are annoyed it isn't better than it is."

60%

metacritic

65
out of 100

WHAT OTHERS SAID

DID STOMPING AROUND AS A STOMPY ROBOT IN PRO STOMPING SIMULATOR ARMORED CORE V DO IT FOR YOU? OR DOES STOMPING NOT APPEAL? EXPLAIN



TONY SKELTON *Armored Core's* been pretty dull for years. It feels (sorry in advance) too mechanical.

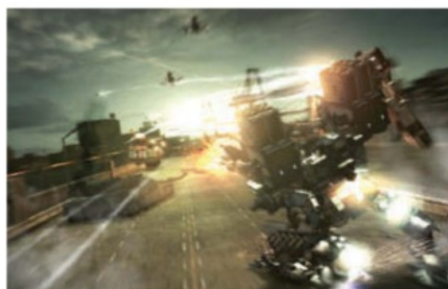
JAKE ROBERTS Yeah it's a bit dull :(

ALEX FORRESTER I LIKE BLOWING STUFF UP!

STEW SIZER A solid mech game, solo was dull but a lot better in a group.

KEVIN SMITH I didn't mind blowing stuff up. But I hated the whole flying around like a blue-arse fly wondering what the hell's going on.

THOMAS DAVIS NOT ENOUGH STOMPY STOMPY!



@HITMAN_MITZ They should stop making that shite and put some effort into creating something new and fresh.

@MASKEDMONKEYMAN It is a good game in co-op but the story leaves you completely baffled! Customisation is the key and gives you loads of options.

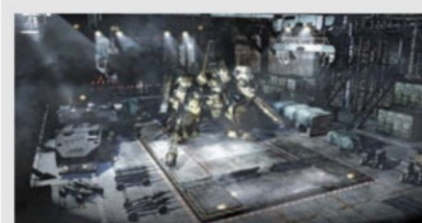
@GAMEHAYES It's fun, simple enough gameplay that I could leave for a month, come back to later and still remember the controls. Hour eater.

@ADAMGUEST1985 I loved *Armored Core* multiplayer on the old games. The newer ones suffer from replacing the fun with too many fancy controls :(

@ESLERTHEGAMER It was okay in short bursts. Although the side missions were so short I found them hard to get into.

@ADAM_ANOUER Love it! Why? Loved the series ever since series one and ever since it's always retained its own niche despite the changes.

@MR_MOOBS It's so long...



Post-Mortem

It looked like a dog, had an irrelevant plot, missions varied from too easy to far too difficult, and there just wasn't enough appeal for a lot of gamers. But there was *something* that drove us to have a place in our hearts for From Software's last big robot simulator.

Armored Core V's biggest problem, though, was one of the ways that this industry works. It has to be in the hands of reviewers early for them to be able to get reviews out in a timely fashion. This meant with *ACV* that many reviewers – ourselves included – were not able to put in *enough* time to the multiplayer and team elements of the game. And that's where the real joy lies.

The game itself is still the same, with the same issues and the same limited appeal, but the community aspects – the way you really start to play together, as a team, with your own distinctive stompy robots of death and your own playing style – is nothing short of brilliant. It's managed to grab itself a cult following, but all things considered *Armored Core V* has ended up an overlooked gem. A bit of a poor-quality gem that isn't worth much, but a gem nonetheless.

PLAY

The Voice Of PlayStation
Gaming For Over A Decade

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NEVER MISS
AN ISSUE!

Next Month

次の定期刊行物

ON SALE
27 SEPTEMBER

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